

Washington, DC - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today joined Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-OR) and U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) in pushing for passage of the Emergency Senior Citizens Relief Act, which would provide Social Security recipients an extra one-time payment of \$250 next year. Without the legislation, millions of seniors will see their Social Security checks hold steady or even shrink because -- for the first time since 1975 -- there will be no cost-of-living adjustment while Medicare-related expenses, particularly prescription drugs, are expected to rise.

"Without a cost-of-living-adjustment for Social Security, seniors will continue to pay for prescription drugs that are becoming increasingly more expensive and they will not receive any increase in benefits to help pay for them," Hinchey said. "While we may not be seeing the general inflation that normally prompts Social Security cost-of-living-adjustments, seniors know full well that their medical costs are not holding steady; they are continuing to rise and we need to help them pay for it the way we always do -- through an increase in Social Security payments. Doing so would relieve a huge financial burden for many seniors who have come to rely on those increases to pay for their many medical needs."

Unless Congress passes the Emergency Senior Citizens Relief Act, Social Security monthly benefits will drop because Medicare costs, particularly prescription drug costs, are scheduled to increase. Nearly 70 percent of beneficiaries depend on Social Security for at least half of their income, and Social Security is the sole source of income for 15 percent of recipients. Under this legislation, all Social Security recipients, railroad retirees, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) beneficiaries and adults receiving veteran benefits would receive the one-time \$250 payment.

DeFazio and Sanders are the original sponsors of the legislation and Hinchey is a leading cosponsor.