

Ambassador of the Netherlands to the U.S. Will Present Congressman with 'Officer in the Order of Orange-Nassau' Medal at New York City Ceremony

New York, NY - Her Royal Highness Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands has announced that she will honor Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) with the Dutch Royal Officer in the Order of Orange-Nassau Medal for the congressman's work to commemorate the quadricentennial anniversary of Henry Hudson's exploration and discovery of the river in New York that now bears his name and for his efforts to strengthen the U.S.-Netherlands relationship.

The Ambassador of the Netherlands to the United States Mrs. Renee Jones, and Consul-General in New York, Mr. Gajus Scheltema, will present the medal to Hinchey at a 3:30pm ceremony on Friday, September 4, 2009 in the Office of the Consulate-General located on the 11th floor of One Rockefeller Plaza in New York City.

"I am extremely humbled and honored by Her Royal Highness Queen Beatrix's decision to award me with such a prestigious royal medal on behalf of her country," Hinchey said. "New York and the Netherlands have such a rich shared history that is being strengthened through the quadricentennial celebrations of Henry Hudson's discovery and exploration of the river that now bears his name. I have long had a great admiration for the Dutch people's contributions to the establishment of our state and have sought to help share that history with my fellow New Yorkers. It's a truly rewarding experience to receive this medal and I will cherish it greatly."

The Order of Orange-Nassau Medal is awarded by Her Royal Highness Queen Beatrix to people who she believes deserve appreciation and recognition from society for the special way in which they have carried out their activities with great character. The royal medal is also awarded to those who have reached special achievements in his/her work. Such 'outstanding or exceptional services in the working environment' must exceed what might normally be expected of a person in that position. This refers to personal dedication, vision and qualities. Furthermore, the merits of the honoree must have a genuinely positive impact on society as a whole. The royal medal is one of The Netherland's highest civil honors.

In March 2009, Hinchey traveled to Amsterdam to join Her Royal Highness Queen Beatrix for a kickoff of the Netherlands' quadricentennial celebration of Henry Hudson's journey. The congressman initiated the federal effort to organize this year's celebrations in New York of

Hudson's historic voyage as well as the quadricentennial anniversary of Samuel de Champlain's exploration of the lake that now bears his name and the bicentennial celebration of Robert Fulton's invention of the steamboat in New York. In addition to meeting with the queen, Hinchey had a full agenda during his four day trip to the Netherlands that included meetings with various political leaders to discuss U.S.-Netherlands partnerships on renewable energy and economic matters.

The congressman, who has a long public record of supporting historic preservation and advancing programs that help inform the public about New York's rich history, has long been interested in the story of Henry Hudson's voyage up the now-Hudson River in 1609 and the subsequent development of New York by the Dutch. The settlement of the Dutch in New York led to the city becoming the most important travel region in the newly developed America. The importance of the river increased over time and led to the development of the Erie Canal, which enabled a growing population to move further west. The development of the canal also made New York City the most significant city on the east coast, settling what had been a two-way competition between Boston and Philadelphia for that status. The establishment of New York as a trading post also made the city a center for international trade.

While the congressman was in Amsterdam earlier this year, he traveled to The Hague for meetings with Members of Parliament, as well as with Ministers and Director Generals to discuss policy issues of mutual concern, including the economy, food safety, and sustainable energy. The congressman discussed his efforts to make New York an international leader in solar energy research and development and sought ways to partner with the Netherlands on solar energy products developed in the United States. Hinchey also met with the U.S. Ambassador to the Netherlands, James Culbertson, as well as members of the diplomatic corps.

Hinchey also visited the Royal Dutch Mint in Utrecht for the striking of the Henry Hudson Commemorative Coin and the New Amsterdam coin. Hinchey held meetings with various mayors of Dutch towns, culminating in a visit to Breukelyn, the town from which the Borough of Brooklyn in New York derives its name. Hinchey also traveled to the Anne Frank House for a private visit to what is now a museum and solemn reminder of the remarkable young woman.

Hinchey noted how Amsterdam was the most diverse city in the world during the 17th Century and how the integration of New York City was patterned after the integration of the population in the Netherlands. The congressman pointed out that many parts of New York City, such as Brooklyn and Harlem, are named after places in the Netherlands.

"Our close relationship with the Netherlands continues and this quadricentennial celebration brings that to the fore and enables people to understand and celebrate the 400th anniversary of this very important event. I look forward to our two nations strengthening our relationship even further over the next century and then celebrating the 500th anniversary of Henry Hudson's discovery and exploration."

Hinchey has personally secured \$1.39 million from Congress for quadricentennial celebrations in New York. In 2002, New York State enacted legislation creating a state quadricentennial commemoration commission. Using the funds that Hinchey secured, the National Park Service (NPS) is coordinating educational, cultural and historical projects with the state commission while also consulting with the congressman. The state commission and the NPS are also working together to support and facilitate marketing efforts for other commemorative related activities.

Hinchey is the author of the legislation that created the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, the first federal action formally recognizing the fundamentally significant role the people of the Hudson Valley played in the early development of America and its institutions. The congressman has worked to secure various allocations of funding for the heritage area. Information on New York's planned quadricentennial celebration can be found at www.exploreny400.com/Home.aspx.