

Washington, DC - In a major victory, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today won the U.S. House of Representatives' approval of \$485.2 million for Lockheed Martin in Owego, New York to continue its development of a new presidential helicopter fleet. Hinchey has been working tirelessly for months to obtain the funds, which are included in the fiscal year 2010 Defense Appropriations bill. With funding secured in the House, the focus now shifts to the Senate, which is poised to take up its own version of the defense spending bill in September.

The funds would be used to continue the research, development, and testing of Lockheed Martin's Increment 1 helicopter, VH-71A. Final approval of the funding would result in the restoration of most, if not all, of the recently announced job cuts associated with the development of the presidential helicopter.

"What many people thought was impossible to accomplish just a few weeks ago has now become reality," Hinchey said. "We have not only restored funding for the presidential helicopter replacement program in the House; we've breathed new life into it by making a very substantive argument for why it is in the best interest of the American taxpayers and the president to continue the development of the presidential helicopter fleet that is already well underway. It is much more fiscally responsible to see an expanded Increment 1 VH-71 program through to the finish line than it would be to follow the administration's proposal and start over from scratch. That point resonated with my colleagues in the House and I'm grateful for their support of this measure."

Hinchey, who is a member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, has spent the last several months aggressively working to refute false claims about the cost of the presidential helicopter. The Pentagon has called for the current Lockheed Martin program to be scratched because of budget concerns and for a new program to be bid, which Hinchey has repeatedly noted would be far more costly than continuing the project that is already well underway. According to the Congressional Research Service, internal Navy documents show that the new presidential helicopter program Secretary Gates is calling for would cost \$14-21 billion when factoring in the \$4 billion that would have been wasted on the canceled VH-71 program.

Upon learning earlier this year of the administration's plans to propose canceling the VH-71 program, Hinchey, Congressman Michael A. Arcuri (D-NY), and several of their House colleagues offered a proposal in March to President Obama that involved expanding Increment 1 of the helicopter project, which has already produced nine helicopters, including four test

articles, that have already undergone more than 800 hours of test flights, in lieu of moving onto Increment 2 -- the more costly and technically sophisticated phase of the project. By expanding the number of Increment 1 helicopters, it's estimated that the Navy could purchase a full fleet of 19 Increment 1 helicopters on-time and within the original budget plan. If Hinchev's request for funding was rejected and the program was canceled, none of the helicopters that have already been constructed could be used, which would be a significant waste of taxpayer money.

Hinchev has worked closely with his colleagues in the House, particularly House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense Chairman John Murtha (D-PA), to have funding included in the fiscal year 2010 spending bill that would effectively implement the proposed plan to expand Increment 1. The \$485.2 million in the defense bill would continue the development of Increment 1 and put the government on a path to procure a full fleet of Increment 1 helicopters within the original budget requirements of the program, which is far less than the \$14-21 billion that the administration's proposed plan would cost.

"The Pentagon repeatedly criticizes the current presidential helicopter program as being too expensive while blatantly ignoring the fact that the alternative it has put forth is far more expensive," Hinchev said. "The current presidential helicopter program has already produced nine helicopters that are so far along in the development process, that they've flown more than 800 hours of test flights. The only responsible step to take is to see these helicopters through and replace the outdated fleet from the 1970's that the White House is currently using."

As part of his effort to demonstrate to his colleagues, as well as senior Navy and White House officials, that canceling the VH-71 program made no logical sense, Hinchev repeatedly pointed to the fact that scrapping the program now would waste approximately \$4 billion in taxpayer money -- \$3.3 billion already spent on the project as well as early termination fees that the Pentagon would owe Lockheed Martin.

The congressman has also repeatedly highlighted the dramatic need for a new presidential helicopter fleet. The current fleet of helicopters, which is being stripped down to reduce weight due to safety concerns, has technology that is more than a half century old and was constructed in the 1970's. It also lacks the modern communications equipment needed for the president to securely communicate with senior staff and administration officials on the ground. Further, the current fleet of helicopters has only 10 seats. With a first family of five that includes the president's mother-in-law, and a crew of five that includes Secret Service agents, there is no room on the current fleet for senior staff to travel with the president, which is critical in coordinating information and instructions during national emergencies. Lockheed Martin's Increment 1 version of the new helicopter can seat 14 passengers, which would enable senior

White House staff members to travel with the president and his family.