

Washington, DC - In another critical step forward, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today secured the full House Appropriations Committee's approval of \$485.2 million for Lockheed Martin in Owego, New York to continue its development of a new presidential helicopter fleet. The committee's approval comes less than one week after that panel's defense subcommittee, of which Hinchey is a member, approved the funds as part of the fiscal year 2010 Defense Appropriations bill. The measure now moves to the full House where it is expected to come up for a vote next week.

Hinchey has been working tirelessly for months to obtain the funding needed to continue the much-needed project for which the Pentagon recently issued a stop work order. 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.

"In the matter of one week, we've managed to bring Lockheed Martin's presidential helicopter program back to life," Hinchey said. "The House Appropriations Committee's approval of \$482.5 million for the continued development of Increment 1 is a major milestone that now means we're just one week away from the full House voting on the funding. The more people learn about the merits of the VH-71 program and how it would be such a huge waste of resources to cancel the program, the more people we have fully on board with our effort to save the project. Today's development is very positive. As we head into next week's vote in the House, I am remaining vigilant in my efforts to ensure that we don't encounter any problems along the way."

Hinchey has spent the last several months aggressively working to refute false claims about the cost of the presidential helicopter. Some have 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 estimate that a new presidential helicopter program would cost \$14-21 billion when factoring in the \$4 billion that would have been wasted on the canceled VH-71 program.

Upon learning of plans to propose canceling the VH-71 program, Hinchey and several of his 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 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 the committee had rejected Hinchev's request for funding 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.

Since then, 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 that proposed plan to expand Increment 1.

"Approving this money is the right thing to do for the security of the president and for the wallets of the American taxpayers," Hinchev said. "Canceling the VH-71 program would severely delay the delivery of a new presidential helicopter fleet and cost billions upon billions of dollars more than it would to finish the work that has already been achieved. This vote today brings us one more important step closer to reversing the mistaken plan put forward by the Pentagon to cancel the VH-71 program."

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 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.

Constitutionally, the House acts first on spending bills. The Senate now needs to take up its own version of the fiscal year 2010 Defense Appropriations bill.