

*Washington, DC* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), a member of the House Appropriations Committee and the Joint Economic Committee, today released the following statement regarding the failure of the U.S. Senate to approve the Fiscal Year 2009 omnibus appropriations bill. The House today will approve a weeklong extension of the Fiscal Year 2008 funding levels in order to give the Senate more time to complete work on the bill.

"Focusing attention on earmarks at a time when our economy is falling off a cliff is like worrying about a paper cut when you're having a heart attack. Instead of confronting the reality that the U.S. lost 651,000 jobs during the shortest month of the year and that the unemployment rate is the highest it's been in 25 years, a select group of senators are stonewalling efforts to pass an important funding bill that will make critical investments needed to help lift our country out of this deep recession. They have hijacked the political process with misguided statements about less than 1 percent of the bill at a time when our economy is extremely fragile and can't afford any further uncertainty.

"Simply extending the budget at Fiscal Year 2008 levels would undermine the economic recovery bill we just passed and negatively impact our ability to climb out of this recession. It's shameful for opponents of this bill to lecture the American people about fiscal responsibility when most of them increased spending to record levels during the Bush administration, passed reckless tax cuts that disproportionately benefited multi-millionaires and corporations, and in turn created record budget deficits and doubled the national debt. The only reason we're even debating this funding bill now is because President Bush opposed it despite the fact that the economy was crumbling all around him.

"These latest efforts to block this important funding bill demonstrate that there are some in Washington who would rather try to score political points and let the economy further disintegrate than actually help fix it. Apparently, many of the bill's opponents miss the days of the Bush administration when they had a partner in the White House who opposed important federal investments in renewable energy research, education, health care, biomedical research, and law enforcement. Most of those who are trying to block this important funding measure continue to oppose any legitimate efforts to restore our economy and will try to gain political points by blaming Democrats for any continued economic failures."