

### *Measure Also Includes Funds To Help Weatherize Homes Of Low-Income Americans To Save Energy*

*Washington, DC* - With the colder months approaching and energy costs expected to remain at high levels, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) yesterday helped the House pass a bill that more than doubles the amount of federal aid available to help low-income Americans pay for home heating costs. The measure includes \$5.1 billion for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which is \$2.5 billion more than the previous year. The \$5.1 billion figure includes an additional \$590.3 million in emergency contingency funds. New York is slated to receive more than \$476 million in LIHEAP funds, but that figure could very well surpass \$500 million if those contingency funds are released sometime over the course of the next year. Hinchey had worked aggressively over the past several months to pass the additional LIHEAP funds.

The bill also allocates \$477.2 million for the Energy Weatherization Assistance Program, which pays for a variety of energy efficient upgrades and appliances for low-income households in order to help lower their monthly energy bills. New York is slated to receive \$45.2 million from the program. The new funds will help weatherize more than 190,000 homes across the country, including approximately 18,000 homes in New York, saving each household about \$400 in energy costs. The Senate is expected to approve the funds as early as today and then the bill will be sent to the White House to be enacted into law.

"It is incumbent upon all of us to ensure that no American ever has to suffer without heat during the bitter cold winter because they can't afford to pay the gas, electric, or oil bill," Hinchey said. "I am very pleased that my colleagues and I dramatically increased the amount of federal aid available to low-income Americans to help pay for heat and to help pay for home improvements that will lower their home energy bills. By funding these home heating and energy efficiency programs, we are helping to relieve one of the growing financial burdens Americans are facing, which will free up money for other necessities such as food, health care, as well as mortgage and rent payments."

Last year, Hinchey and his colleagues in the House pressed for higher levels of LIHEAP funding, but the White House and its allies in Congress blocked increased aid and instead forced the allocation of LIHEAP funds to be left at a little more than \$2.5 billion, including \$586 million in contingency funds to be released at the president's discretion.

Recognizing that low-income people in New York and across the country are going to need greater assistance to pay for home heating and cooling as a result of higher oil prices, Hinchey and his colleagues pressed the House leadership over the summer to pass a funding measure that would allocate an additional \$2.5 billion for LIHEAP -- which would result in LIHEAP being funded at \$5.1 billion this year. Hinchey and his colleagues succeeded in their work to increase LIHEAP funding when the House passed a measure with \$5.1 billion in LIHEAP funding, including \$590.3 million in contingency funds.

The Energy Weatherization Assistance Program helps put home improvement contractors back to work and enables low-income individuals and families to save on their heating and cooling bills. The funds pay for contractors to learn how to use sophisticated tools to weatherize homes and then puts those contractors to work as they make improvements to thousands of older, energy inefficient homes whose residents could not afford to make those improvements on their own. As a result, more than 190,000 low-income households will see their energy bills drop by 20-30 percent annually.