

Washington, DC - In laying out the case as to how the vast majority of Americans are facing much tougher economic circumstances than they did before President Bush took office, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today directly challenged U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson to defend the administration's use of "weapons of mass economic destruction" against working and middle class Americans. During a hearing before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services, Hinchey blasted Paulson and the entire Bush administration for advocating and enacting tax cuts targeted for the wealthiest Americans, subsidizing the oil industry at a time when the industry is experiencing record profits, and for not doing enough to help millions of Americans from losing their home or seeing the value of their home plummet.

"The United States is in a recession and the question that remains to be answered is how deep will this recession go," Hinchey said. "The economic policies of the Bush administration have wrecked the working and middle class in this country. People in New York and across the country are faced with rising mortgage and rent payments, extraordinarily high gas prices, soaring health care premiums, more expensive grocery items, and President Bush's answer to all of this is to ignore the fact that we're in a recession and say that we should make permanent the tax cuts he passed for the elite in this country. When the wealthiest 5 percent of households own more than 57 percent of the wealth in this country, things are clearly out of whack. Government should work for all the people, not just corporate executives and wealthy campaign donors. This president simply doesn't get it and Congress must put an end to his use of weapons of mass economic destruction -- tax cuts for the wealthy, subsidies for oil companies, and dramatic cuts in domestic spending to name a few -- so that we can get this country back on track again."

Economic conditions across the country have severely worsened under the policies of the Bush administration. President Bush is tied for the worst jobs record of any president since the Great Depression with 3.1 million manufacturing jobs lost. Since Bush took office in January 2001, the number of Americans who have experienced long-term unemployment has nearly doubled. And those who have employer-sponsored health care, have seen their premiums climb \$1,500. At the same time, a record 47 million Americans don't have any health insurance. Additionally, home foreclosures are soaring across the country as a result of the mortgage crisis while causing the values of many homes across the country to drop in value.

Since President Bush took office, the price of gas at the pump has doubled, the cost of home heating oil has tripled, and a barrel of oil has quadrupled in cost. ExxonMobil last month announced it recorded a profit of \$40.6 billion for 2007 -- the largest annual profit in history for an American company. That announcement came after Bush pushed for and helped pass

billions of tax cuts and subsidies for ExxonMobil and the rest of the oil industry, while also threatening to veto legislation from the now-Democratic-controlled Congress that would repeal those tax breaks.

"It doesn't surprise me that Treasury Secretary Paulson thinks the economic circumstances are going to get better because they will get better for him, President Bush, and the rest of their friends in the elite upper class. It's the rest of America that's going to continue to be left far behind to struggle," Hinchey said. "When President Bush said he didn't realize economists predicted gas would rise to \$4 per gallon at the pump it was another clear sign that he's lost touch with the real world and that he needs to start pumping his own gas. Times are hard for so many Americans and this president just has no clue about any of it."

Throughout his entire testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services, Paulson maintained that the country is on the right track. Hinchey and other Democrats on the committee vehemently refuted that argument.