

Washington, DC - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today announced the release of more than \$14,000,000 in increased federal funding that will assist low-income New Yorkers pay for heating costs. The funds are from the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) emergency contingency fund and will provide 11 states with heating assistance for the winter months.

"Between record-setting oil prices and the sky rocketing costs of everyday goods, it was absolutely critical for this added federal aid for home heating," said Hinchey. "Our nation's low-income individuals and families are already struggling by cutting back on other necessities such as food and medicine to pay for heating costs. Not only will this funding help alleviate the economic situations of many upstate New Yorkers but it will allow them to purchase the products they need, which will stimulate our upstate economy."

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps pay the winter heating bills or summer cooling bills of low-income and elderly people on fixed incomes. Since two-thirds of the families receiving LIHEAP assistance have incomes of less than \$8,000 a year, the program clearly helps the people who need help the most. The Consolidated Appropriations bill for FY2008 contained \$2.57 billion in funding for LIHEAP, including \$590 million in contingency funds to be released at the president's discretion. Today, the administration released about \$40 million in LIHEAP emergency contingency funds. On January 16, 2008 they released \$450 million. Hinchey has supported the full and immediate release of the contingency LIHEAP funds.

"The cost of energy is making it difficult for low-income people, particularly elderly, low-income people, to pay their energy bills and also to meet their other needs," Hinchey said. "We want to make sure that the money appropriated for the LIHEAP program is fully released by the White House and used this year so that people do not suffer as a result."

Home heating prices are projected by the Energy Information Administration (EIA) to reach almost \$1,000 this year for the typical family, a figure almost 80 percent higher than the average cost of home heating during the winter of 2001-02. As a result of these skyrocketing energy prices, thousands of families with children and seniors on fixed incomes could be left freezing this winter, especially in cold weather states used to seeing the temperatures go down below zero for extended periods of time.