

*Washington, DC* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today announced the release of \$82,315,613 in increased federal funding that will assist low-income New Yorkers pay for heating costs. The assistance was included by Congress as emergency contingency funding included in the Omnibus Appropriations bill for FY2008.

"At a time when we are seeing record oil prices, it was absolutely necessary for Congress to increase critical federal aid for home heating to our nation's low-income individuals and families. It would be unconscionable to force the nation's neediest to go without heat this winter or require them to cut back on other necessities such as food and medicine to pay for that heat," Hinchey said. "Not only will this funding help alleviate the strained financial situations of many upstate New Yorkers but it will allow them to purchase goods they need, thus stimulating 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. The administration agreed to release about \$450 million in LIHEAP emergency contingency funds Wednesday afternoon. Hinchey has supported the full and immediate release of the contingency LIHEAP funds.

"The high cost of energy is making it extremely difficult for low-income people, particularly elderly, low-income people, to pay their energy bills, and also to meet their other needs," Hinchey said. "That, and the drop in temperatures recently, is causing some serious problems for many people. We want to make sure that the money that was appropriated in the Omnibus Appropriations bill 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.

## **Hinchey Announces Release of \$82,315,613 In Heating Cost Assistance For New Yorkers**

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