

Congressman Discusses New FEMA Funding For Construction Of A Flood Wall At The Hospital

Binghamton, NY - As part of his ongoing commitment to protect women from breast cancer, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today announced the final approval of \$335,000 in new federal funding he secured to expand breast cancer screening at Lourdes Hospital. Hinchey used his position on the House Appropriations Committee to secure the funds, which will enable Lourdes to continue improving the accessibility of its breast cancer diagnostic equipment both inside the hospital and outside with its mobile breast cancer screening van.

"The new digital mammography equipment that these federal funds will help purchase will help save the lives of women throughout the area," Hinchey said. "It is absolutely critical that women are regularly checked for breast cancer so that if the disease is present it can be caught early on and then treated effectively. Lourdes Breast Cancer Center's digitally equipped mobile mammography van will help ensure that women who either don't have insurance, have insurance that doesn't cover as much as it should, or live in rural parts of the area get screened for breast cancer. Additionally, more breast cancer screenings will be able to be done on site at the hospital as a result of additional digital mammography equipment being installed in the Breast Care Center. Breast cancer does not discriminate between insured and uninsured women or urban and rural women, which is why we must find ways to ensure that that all women have access to mammograms."

Lourdes Hospital recently acquired a new mobile mammography van and equipped it with digital screening equipment. The hospital's new van, which is a dramatic improvement over the previous van's outdated film-based equipment, will focus on increasing breast cancer screenings for uninsured and underinsured women who live in rural parts of the Southern Tier. The van serves patients in Broome, Tioga, Chenango and Delaware counties.

The new funds that Hinchey secured will allow Lourdes Hospital to install digital mammography equipment in the hospital's Breast Care Center in order to increase the number of Southern Tier women it can screen and protect from the disease. Hinchey's funds will actually pay for new equipment on the mobile breast cancer screening van so that the digital equipment currently on the van can be transferred and installed in the hospital's Breast Care Center, which

currently is in need of a digital mammography.

Adding additional mammography equipment to the Breast Care Center will enable Lourdes Hospital to extend its screening hours and better meet the needs of area residents. With an additional digital mammography unit in the Center, Lourdes will be able to increase by 25 percent the number of women served by digital mammography while decreasing the waiting time for women. This is important because when Lourdes switched from analog to digital mammography, they found that the two digital machines on location at the Center could not meet the volume that they previously maintained with their four analog machines. The new equipment is therefore critical to helping Lourdes Hospital meet its goals for digitized data and the community's need for mammograms.

"Digital mammography is currently the gold standard for screening mammograms and we believe this should be made available to every woman, regardless of where she lives or her ability to pay," Lourdes Hospital President and CEO John D. O'Neil said. "With the support of Congressman Hinchey, we are now able to offer this same gold standard to every woman in our service area, leaving no one behind."

Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths among women in the United States with one out of every eight women who lives to be at least 85 developing breast cancer at some point in her life. The current Lourdes Breast Care Center, which is part of a not-for-profit community hospital and regional cancer center, has seen a 60 percent increase in patient volume over the past decade. The incidence of breast cancer for women in Broome County alone is the highest in the region, yet only 40 percent of the women in the region are obtaining mammograms.

A 2005 New England Journal of Medicine study demonstrated that digital technology was significantly better than standard mammography in women who were younger than 50 years, those with dense breast tissue, and women who were premenopausal or perimenopausal. The urgency of early detection in this group of women cannot be overstated since they traditionally have more aggressive cancers than older women with less dense breasts.

The congressman and hospital officials also discussed the nearly \$5.2 million grant Lourdes Hospital recently received from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to construct a flood wall and take other steps to protect against future flooding. Hinchey and his staff had met with FEMA representatives to press the agency for funds to protect Lourdes

Hospital from flooding.

"Investing in a flood wall today will help save lives and money in the future," Hinchey said. "Unfortunately, the possibility of a severe flood in the Southern Tier is very real and we must prepare for it now. This new flood wall at Lourdes Hospital will allow patients there to not worry about whether they may have to be evacuated while in the middle of receiving treatment and care at the facility due to a massive flood."

On June 28, 2006, the Susquehanna River overflowed causing flood water to inundate Lourdes Hospital. Sixteen to twenty inches of contaminated flood water covered the entire lower (ground level) floor of the hospital despite previous efforts by the hospital to prevent flooding. All patients at the hospital were evacuated and the entire facility had to be shut down. Severe damage was caused to the power plant as well as most of the support functions essential to hospital operations.

Lourdes will use the new federal funding to construct a flood wall on the west, south and east sides of the hospital complex and is designed to protect the facility from a 500 year flood. The wall will be constructed of solid concrete and will have a total of 10 openings to accommodate vehicle and foot traffic. The openings will have automatic gates. The design will also include automatic pumping of any water that enters the hospital side of the floodwall. It's anticipated that the full cost of the flood wall will be \$6.9 million.