

Washington, DC - As part of the first 100 hours agenda of the new Democratic-controlled Congress, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today helped the House pass the first increase in the federal minimum wage in a decade. The bipartisan measure will increase the minimum wage to \$7.25 an hour over the span of two years.

"During the last 10 years with Republicans in control of the House, Congress never increased the minimum wage. Now, less than a week after taking control of Congress, Democrats have passed a \$2.10 increase that is long overdue and will help millions of Americans, including 314,000 New Yorkers, pay for food, housing, health care, and other critical expenses," Hinchey said. "The gap between the rich and poor is growing at an alarming rate. When the average CEO of a company earns more before lunch than a minimum wage worker makes all year, the system is broken. No American who works full-time and year-round should ever have to live in poverty."

The measure the House approved today will increase the minimum wage by \$2.10 – from \$5.15 to \$7.25 an hour over two years. The bipartisan bill raises the minimum wage to \$5.85 60 days after enactment; to \$6.55 one year later; and to \$7.25 one year after that. Increasing the minimum wage to \$7.25 would result in an additional \$4,400 per year for a family of three, equaling 15 months of groceries or more than two years of health care -- helping them to keep up with rising costs.

"While I'm pleased that Congress finally acted and raised the minimum wage to \$7.25 over the next two years, we must do more," Hinchey said. "I recognize that we had to take a pragmatic approach and pass a \$2.10 increase over the span of two years because it was more palatable to some members of Congress. Now that we've passed this increase, I'm going to be fighting for separate legislation that would further increase the minimum wage to ensure a better standard of living for all Americans. America should not be a country where people who work hard and honest have to struggle so hard to get by because pay is so low. That's not what this country is about."

In October 2006, more than 650 economists, including five Nobel laureates and six past presidents of the American Economics Association release a statement in support of increasing the minimum wage to \$7.25 per hour. The minimum wage issue must now be addressed by the Senate, which is expected to do so in the coming weeks.

Hinchey Helps House Approve Increase In Minimum Wage

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