Washington, DC - Today Governor Paterson introduced a budget extension bill that would close 41 state parks and 14 historic sites starting Monday. Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) released the following statement in response.

"Governor Paterson's decision to move forward with a plan to close 55 state parks and historic sites is disappointing. It puts federal funding for our parks at risk, has a negative economic impact on our state and will hurt New York families who rely on state parks for free or low-cost recreation.

"The state park system generates nearly $2 billion in economic activity every year. Closing these parks and historic sites will have negative consequences for the small businesses in the surrounding areas.

"At my urging, the National Park Service has already informed the state that park closures would put New York in noncompliance with the Land and Water Conservation Fund, jeopardizing current and future federal funding.

"I hope the state legislature will do everything it can to restore this funding. It is vital that New York families are not locked out from the state parks and historic sites they should be free to enjoy."