

Maurice Hinchey NEWS

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HINCHEY SUPPORTS INTERIOR APPROPRIATIONS BILL THAT INCLUDES FUNDING FOR KEY NEW YORK PROJECTS

WASHINGTON – U.S. Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) voted for final passage of the House Interior Appropriations bill, which includes earmarks for priority preservation and conservation projects around New York State. Although he expressed disappointment that the bill failed to provide increased funding for the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, Hinchey praised the bill for providing adequate funding for environmental protection programs, national parks and historic sites.

“The House-passed Interior Appropriations bill includes funding for my priority requests for New York State,” said Hinchey. “Key allocations for the Hudson Valley Heritage Area, Ellis Island, the New York City Watershed, and urban parks, which I secured at the sub-committee level, have cleared another hurdle in the legislative process. I am also very pleased that the bill provided \$30 million in funding for state land acquisition through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the first time that program has been funded in nearly a decade.”

The House passed its version of the Fiscal Year 2000 Interior Appropriations bill early this morning. The bill sets funding levels for discretionary programs of the Interior Department, the Forest Service, and energy research and conservation programs in the Department of Energy. Hinchey is a member of the House Appropriations Committee’s Subcommittee on the Interior, which authored the bill.

“This is a fair and reasonable bill, despite the tight budget constraints that we had to operate under,” Hinchey said. “Our subcommittee’s allocation is far below the real needs of the agencies funded through this bill. Nevertheless, I think we crafted the best possible legislation under the circumstances. I had only two major disappointments: that our efforts to secure increased funding for the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities were not successful; and that the bill provides only a small fraction of the president’s request for its Lands Legacy programs. The Lands Legacy initiative provides money to acquire and protect critical lands for open space, recreation and wildlife habitat.”

Earmarks requested by Hinchey for key New York projects remained in the bill, including:

- **\$1 million for the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area.** The legislation provides the maximum funding authorized for the Heritage Area. The funding will be used

to complete the Heritage Area's long-term management plan and provide funding for a grants program for communities and non-profit organizations to preserve significant sites in the Hudson Valley.

- **\$1 million for Ellis Island.** The House bill provides an additional \$1 million to the National Park Service for the preservation and restoration of historic structures at Ellis Island. The additional funding will be used to help finance the stabilization of these structures, addressing immediate safety needs at the site.
- **\$800,000 for New York City Watershed projects.** The House bill earmarks \$500,000 of the Forest Service's Economic Action Grant program and \$300,000 of the Forest Stewardship program for activities in the New York City watershed. These grants will support increased technical assistance for the protection of the watershed and compatible economic development.
- **Increased National Park Service support for the Lower East Side Tenement Museum.** Language in the bill directs the National Park Service to provide technical assistance and resources to complete a management plan and to develop programs in cooperation with the Statue of Liberty National Monument.
- **\$460,000 for Castle Clinton Monument.** Funding is provided through the National Park Service's construction budget to prevent further deterioration at the Battery Park site and to rehabilitate its public facilities.
- **\$1.46 million increase in funding for the Urban and Community Forestry Program.** This Forest Service program serves the needs of urban and suburban communities. Funding through the program is used for the maintenance of and improvements to urban areas and community parks.