

For Immediate Release  
October 30, 2007

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## **Hinchey Testifies Before House Panel In Support Of Own Bill To Create Historic Trail Following American & French Journey To Yorktown**

*Washington, DC* -- Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today testified before the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, of which he is a member, in support of the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route (W3R) bill -- a piece of legislation he authored that would designate the path French troops took in 1781 from Newport, Rhode Island to Yorktown, Virginia as a National Historic Trail. On that path, French troops joined General George Washington's command en route to defeating the British and helping to win the American Revolutionary War. Today's hearing was intended to give members of the subcommittee insight into the importance of Hinchey's bill and serves as a precursor to a future committee meeting in which the legislation will come up for a vote.

"Students of history are thrilled at the prospect of designating a more than 600-mile trail tracing the routes taken in 1781 by the armies under George Washington and French count Rochambeau's command as a National Historic Trail," Hinchey said. "Their march from New England to square off with the British Army at Yorktown is a crucial story in our country's rich history. A national trail would help us to interpret and explain this important route to all Americans, allow citizens and visitors to walk along that historic trail themselves, and enable all of us to truly take stock in what it means to fight for the right for freedom and democracy."

The W3R bill traces the more than 600-mile route Washington and Rochambeau took through eight states: Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia as well as the District of Columbia. American troops under the command of Commander-in-Chief George Washington joined the French force, which was led by General Jean-Baptiste de Rochambeau, outside New York City. On October 17, 1781, the combined armies defeated the British army with the help of a French fleet commanded by Admiral de Grasse. General Cornwallis' surrender that day at Yorktown ended major hostilities in the American Revolutionary War.

The bill designates the path as a National Historic Trail, maps the route, and gives administrative authority to the Secretary of the Interior. Additionally, the bill specifies that no land shall be acquired outside of federal lands without the consent of the owner of the land. The measure has the support of the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Association.

Colonel (Retired) James M. Johnson, Ph.D., who is the co-vice chair (New York) of the National Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route Association, and is the military historian of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area and the Executive Director of the Hudson River Valley Institute also testified at today's hearing. In prepared remarks, Johnson testified before the subcommittee that, "...[Hinchey's bill] would best preserve and interpret the resources of the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route, and it offers the best value for the American public." Johnson later said, "On the eve of the state visit to the United States of French President Nicolas Sarkozy, we should remember the magnificence of that join American-French 'standing miracle' today and pass that remembrance into the future with the designation of the Washington-Rochambeau Route National Historic Trail. I strongly urge that you support passage of the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail Designation Act."

Karen Taylor-Goodrich, Associate Director of Visitor and Resource Protection for the National Park Service also testified at today's hearing in support of Hinchey's bill. In prepared remarks, Taylor-Goodrich testified, "Our experience during the course of the study for the trail has indicated that there is widespread support for designation among affected state and local governments and private organizations to develop a comprehensive plan for the trail."

During his testimony today, Hinchey expressed his strong gratitude for the work that Colonel Johnson and the National Park Service have done in support of the W3R bill. In 2004, Hinchey helped author the bill that officially commemorated the 225th Anniversary of the American Revolution Commemoration Act.

Hinchey's bill has 21 cosponsors in the House. An identical bill is pending in the Senate.

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