

# My position on Belleayre Resort hasn't changed

Dear Editor:

I always appreciate the *Freeman* sending reporters to cover press conferences that I hold to share important information with my constituents. With almost 700,000 people residing in the 22nd congressional district, interacting with the media is a critical means of communicating with my constituents. However, when the reporter fails to convey the facts accurately in the subsequent story, residents are denied the opportunity to hear the truth and are sometimes subjected to misinformation and fallacy.

I held a press conference in my Kingston office (Jan. 15) to share with the media, and hence the residents of the district, an agenda that I am pursuing this year in Washington that will jump start our economy and redirect the resources of the federal government in a more thoughtful and productive manner.

After discussing my thoughts on appropriate investments in the economy to support renewable energy technology and manufacturing jobs, I was asked about jobs that could be created through a proposed project on Belleayre Mountain. I responded that compared to the jobs we've been discussing, I didn't think those jobs that could be created would have the same type of impact on our local or regional economy. I also went on to state my long-held opinion that the project, even within the structure laid out by the compromise orchestrated by the governor, was still too big for the location in its proposed to be sited.

My position on the project's density has remained consistent from the beginning. To confirm that, all the reporter needed to do was to reread my quote that was included in the governor's press release announcing the compromise. I commended the governor's leadership, praised the compromise as a positive step forward and offered continued concern about the size of the project and its potential impact to surrounding communities such as Pine Hill. I also raised these issues in comments I submitted to the state Department of Environmental Conservation at their its scoping session held in early January.

I believe that the compromise secured by the governor represented a dramatic improvement to the proposed project, particularly because it ensured the protection of over 12,000 acres of

sensitive land within the Watershed and adjacent to the Catskill Park as "forever wild," and required a supplemental environmental review of the remaining project.

It is my hope and expectation that the additional environmental review will ultimately result in a smaller, more improved project that will reduce negative environmental impacts and maximize benefits to the surrounding communities and their residents.

If the reporter had taken but a few moments to research my position on this project or follow up his questions with more precise questions before jumping to a conclusion that was inaccurate and misinformed, he would have been able to present an honest account of my position with regard to this project.

I hope the next time I hold a press availability to share important information with the public, the *Freeman* will send a reporter interested in objectively covering the facts instead of one who would rather pursue his own agenda and is more interested in writing fiction.

MAURICE HINCHEY

Kingston

*The writer, a Democrat, represents District 22 in the House of Representatives.*

*Editor's note: After a thorough review of the congressman's complaints and the existing record he references, the Freeman stands by its account of his remarks and its characterization of the congressman's dramatic shift of his position on the project. It is true Hinchey qualified his otherwise enthusiastic endorsement of Gov. Spitzer's plan in the governor's announcement of the plan, as well as in his statement for the record of the Department of Environmental Conservation scoping session. But nothing in those qualifications suggested the congressman had reserved the right or would disparage nearly to the point of disavowal an agreement he has conceded is nearly identical to the one he originally proposed two years earlier. Readers deserve to know that, at least on the occasion of the Jan. 15 press conference, the congressman did so disparage the agreement and appeared to have dramatically changed his position on the project. Finally, the congressman's attempted disparagement of the integrity of the reporter — Political Editor Hugh Reynolds — in reporting his remarks is entirely contrary to the facts.*