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REPRESENTATIVE STRAUS ANNOUNCES HOUSE BUDGET ADOPTION FOR FISCAL '06

Boston: Rep. Bill Straus (D-Mattapoisett) announced today that the House of Representatives passed its annual State spending plan for the next fiscal year beginning July 1, 2005. Floor debate in the House led to a \$30 million increase in school aid, \$86 million in additional aid for hospitals, \$5.7 million for environmental programs and \$9 million in new economic development initiatives.

“I was pleased to have co-sponsored the successful amendments increasing above the Governor’s request, Chapter 70 school aid by \$30 million and regional school transportation aid by \$4.5 million,” said Representative Straus. “In difficult financial times it is imperative to maintain our commitment to the towns and schools in our communities,” he added.

The House budget includes an additional \$105.6 million for Chapter 70 funding over the current year, including \$28.4 million in funding added on by members during floor debate; the addition guarantees that all districts receive at least \$50 more in aid per pupil in Fiscal Year 2006 than they did this year, providing the first increase in Chapter 70 aid in several years for many communities.

State aid for public higher education will also ensure an increase for Bristol Community College within the guidelines of the new “parity formula” for Community Colleges which the House established.

The budget also includes \$1,000,000 for support services for families with autistic children through the Department of Mental Retardation; continued funding for water quality monitoring in Buzzards Bay; and rejection of the Governor’s proposal to divert Community Preservation Act monies away from towns participating in this program such as Fairhaven and potentially Marion.

Within his legislative district, Representative Straus identified specific school aid increases by the House over the current year of \$107,400 for Fairhaven, \$20,950 for Marion, \$24,100 for Mattapoisett, \$180,850 for Middleborough, \$30,560 for Rochester and \$60,650 for the Old Rochester Regional School District. Total school funding for

these districts in the House Budget is \$7,292,298 for Fairhaven, \$338,668 for Marion, \$473,898 for Mattapoisett, \$15,072,339 for Middleborough, \$1,329,980 for Rochester, and \$1,530,510 for Old Rochester.

The Budget will now proceed to the Senate for further consideration. Any differences between the House and Senate budgets will be resolved in a conference committee before being sent to the Governor for his signature.

“This year’s House Budget contains some added increases in critical areas but also reflects the limited growth in revenues since the 2001 recession. Unlike the Federal Government, our budget must be, and is, balanced,” concluded Representative Straus.

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