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ROCHESTER HOUSE MEMBERS ANNOUNCE NEW UR LASER LAB FUNDING \$117.3 Million Secured Over Two Fiscal Years

Washington, D.C. - Rochester area Members of Congress - Rep. Jim Walsh, Rep. Tom Reynolds, Rep. Amo Houghton and Rep. Louise Slaughter - today announced that \$63.132 million in FY 2004 funds has been appropriated to significantly expand the capabilities of the University of Rochester's Laboratory for Laser Energetics (LLE). The funding is included in the FY 2004 Energy and Water Development Appropriations conference report that passed the House earlier this week.

The laboratory currently houses the sixty-beam Omega laser, the largest operating ultraviolet laser in the world used for inertial confinement fusion research. It is one of the most important high technology assets in upstate New York and represents the only major National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA) Defense Programs Research Program in New York State.

This year's appropriation includes \$20 million for the design, engineering and construction of a cost-shared new facility that includes four very large new laser beams (Omega EP) to be used in conjunction with the existing Omega Laser. The \$63.132 million secured by the delegation is \$23 million higher than the Bush administration's request, and is in addition to a \$54.2 million appropriation secured last fiscal year. The OMEGA laser funding was included in the administration's Department of Energy (DOE) National Nuclear Security Administration request through the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water.

"I'm pleased to announce this appropriation as it represents how successful Rochester's Congressional delegation can be working together," Congressman Walsh said. "The laboratory is vital to the health of leading edge science in Upstate New York. This facility will allow us to continue to retain and recruit some of the best and brightest engineers, scientists, and technicians in an area critical to the Upstate economy."

"This funding means jobs and opportunity in our area," Reynolds said. "And it ensures that the Laser Lab at the University of Rochester will continue to be a national and world leader in its field. This is a tremendous partnership between the private sector, academia, and the state and federal government, and it is outstanding news for U of R and Western New York."

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LASER LAB FUNDING SECURED

November 20, 2003

Page Two

“Projects such as the University Laser Lab are funded when the Monroe County delegation works together, and that's exactly what happened here,” Congressman Houghton said. “This is a terrific project and I'm proud to support it.”

Congresswoman Slaughter noted her long-standing support of the laboratory and said, “This project will not only keep University scientists and engineers at the cutting edge, but will also bolster the industries that support the facility and construction of the new building. Further, the laboratory's work in stockpile stewardship is one reason the nation is no longer required to test nuclear weapons.”

The research at LLE in inertial confinement fusion (ICF) supports the stockpile stewardship program (SSP) of the Department of Energy with the long-term goal of fusion energy. The inertial confinement fusion program is a key element in the NNSA's Stockpile Stewardship Program (SSP) established to ensure the preservation of the core intellectual and technical competencies of the United States' nuclear weapons program. The OMEGA laser at the University of Rochester is the principal laser research facility for the University of Rochester and the three national laboratories (Los Alamos, Sandia, and Livermore) for ICF and SSP experiments. LLE is the only facility that also trains significant numbers of graduate students in inertial fusion. The new facility will also allow a number of investigations related to high energy density physics; experiments will investigate matter under extreme conditions such as those in stars and the giant planets. These “laboratory astrophysics” experiments will reveal the fundamental nature of matter under extreme conditions.

The construction of the new laser beams assures that the facility at Rochester remains technologically at the leading edge of high power laser research in the Nation. The laboratory, in its 34th year, has been an international leader in fusion research. LLE Director Robert L. McCrory stated that the University “is grateful for the continued funding that will allow the laboratory to continue to lead the quest for fusion energy.”

Reynolds, Slaughter, and Houghton, longtime advocates for the University of Rochester's Laboratory for Laser Energetics, worked with Walsh, New York's senior member of the House Appropriations Committee and Chair of its VA/HUD and Independent Agencies Subcommittee, to include the funding in the FY 2004 House Energy and Water bill.

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