

December 1, 2005 * For Immediate Release
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ENGEL COMMEMORATES WORLD AIDS DAY

*Praises New York efforts, but urges that more can be done
Renews calls for Reauthorization of Ryan White CARE Act*

Washington, D.C.- Congressman Eliot Engel (D-NY) issued the following statement commemorating World AIDS Day on December 1st, which recognizes the goals and improvements to combat HIV/ AIDS Worldwide:

“World AIDS Day gives us a chance to evaluate what needs to be done to make substantial progress on combating HIV/ AIDS, both at home and abroad. As a Member of Congress on both the House International Relations Committee and the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over public health, I have been a constant advocate of critically needed federal assistance. Much has been done on both the federal and state level, but we continue to fall short on making inroads for HIV prevention and early treatment.

“In New York, significant time and money has been invested into HIV/ AIDS care. No state spends more than New York to care for its residents with HIV/ AIDS -- over \$3 billion last year. Sadly, New York’s gracious efforts still do not sufficiently address the need. New York City comprises three percent of the nation's population, but more than 16 percent of the nation's AIDS cases.

“World AIDS Day is a call to action for both public officials and private citizens. The people deserve to know what is being done to combat this grave illness. In Congress, I spearheaded a bipartisan effort to seek timely reauthorization of the Ryan White CARE Act, which expired on September 30, 2005. The Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act addresses the unmet health needs of persons living with

HIV/AIDS by funding primary health care and support services. I strongly urged the Chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee to commence with hearings on the reauthorization of the Ryan White CARE Act when Congress reconvenes in the new year.

“I have also called on Congress to continue reforms to Medicaid to help more people living with HIV. Currently people must wait until they are disabled by AIDS to receive Medicaid coverage, which is counterproductive to recommendations for early, aggressive HIV care. I offered an amendment to reform Medicaid to allow early treatment for those with HIV that failed primarily on party lines. HIV no longer has to be a death sentence, but current Medicaid eligibility rules prevent physicians from providing needed care until the disease has progressed beyond repair.

“World AIDS Day is an opportunity to examine what progress we have made and to seriously consider what we must do to address this overwhelming problem. Working together, we can address both prevention and early treatment options, attacking HIV/AIDS head on.”

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