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GUARINI ANNOUNCES CONGRESSIONAL HEARING ON ELLIS ISLAND—STATUE OF LIBERTY FARE INCREASE

In response to the recent fare increase for ferry service to Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty, U.S. Representative Frank J. Guarini (D-NJ) announced that the House Interior Committee will hold an Oversight Hearing on October 11th at 10:00 in 1324 Longworth.

"We can't stand by and let one company, with a monopoly on the ferry service, double its fares and charge the average family $25 for a ten minute ferry ride -- especially when visitors can walk across a bridge to Ellis Island," stated Guarini.

"Ellis Island was renovated with contributions from all over our nation and should be open to the public for everyone to enjoy their heritage regardless of their ability to pay. It is an outrage that people must stand in the ferry line for hours to pay $6 per person when they could simply walk across the bridge." Guarini said.

Concerned about the accessibility of the national monuments to the working family, Guarini asked Representative Bruce Vento (D-MN), Chairman of the National Parks & Public Lands Subcommittee, to investigate the fare increase and the monopoly held by the concessionaire for almost 40 years.

Guarini, who plans to testify at the hearing, has contacted Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan concerning the Park Service's renewal of Circle Line's contract for another fifteen years -- four years before it was due to expire in 1992. "This situation does nothing to encourage innovation or improvements in service," Guarini stated in a letter dated July 23rd. Because the ferry is the only way to visit the monuments, Guarini is urging the Park Service to make the construction bridge permanent and open for the public to cross free of charge.

Chairman Vento, whose Subcommittee has jurisdiction over the National Park Service and its concessions policy, will re-examine the Concessions Policy Act -- which allows the Park Service to grant preferential contract renewals to concessionaires. In fact, demonstrating the uncompetitive nature of this process, a recent report by the U.S. Inspector General cited that the same concessionaires made the only bids for 28 of the 29 contracts renewed between 1985 and 1989.