

*News from*  
***Congressman Eliot Engel***

*Representing the Bronx, Westchester, and Rockland Counties*  
*Offices in the Bronx, Mount Vernon and West Nyack*  
*2161 Rayburn HOB, Washington, DC 20515*

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Contact: Eric Jacobstein or Jason Steinbaum, 202-226-9980  
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**HOUSE PASSES ENGEL BILL TO CREATE  
DRUG POLICY COMMISSION**

*Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission to Evaluate U.S. International and  
Domestic Counternarcotics Efforts*

Washington, D.C. – Today, the House of Representatives unanimously passed the Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission Act of 2009 (H.R. 2134) – a bipartisan bill authored by Congressman Eliot Engel. H.R. 2134 will create an independent commission to evaluate U.S. policies and programs aimed at reducing illicit drug supply and demand in the Western Hemisphere

“Billions upon billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars have been spent over the years to combat the drug trade in Latin America and the Caribbean. In spite of our efforts, the positive results are few and far between,” said Rep. Engel, the Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere. He added, “Clearly, the time has come to take a fresh look at our counternarcotics efforts here at home and throughout the Americas, and the Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission will do just that. The citizens of our great country, who deal every day with illegal drugs on their streets, and our partners in the Americas, who have worked with us in fighting the drug trade for years, deserve no less.”

The Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission will be required to submit recommendations on future U.S. drug policy to Congress, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, and the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), 12 months after its first meeting.

Rep. Engel – who is also a senior member of the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health – added, “To tackle our nation’s horrific drug problem, we cannot simply look to solutions on the supply side. The Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission will assess all aspects of our drug policy – including domestic prevention and treatment programs.”

The Obama Administration has been increasingly focused on the so-called 'demand side' of the drug trade. In March, on her first trip to Mexico as Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton said, "Our insatiable demand for illegal drugs fuels the drug trade."

While the United States accounts for approximately five percent of world population, in 2007 an estimated 17 percent of the world's users of illegal drugs were from the United States. One hundred percent of the United States cocaine supply originates in South America, and over 90 percent of the United States heroin supply originates in Colombia and Mexico. In addition, Central America and the Caribbean are key transit regions for drugs entering the United States.