

Republican assault on regulations jeopardizes scientific advancement

WASHINGTON –Congresswoman Louise M. Slaughter (NY-28) today fought against efforts of the House Majority to advance doomed-to-fail legislation that jeopardizes the implementation of genetic anti-discrimination laws. Under the Republican Majority's efforts to essentially halt any new regulatory guidelines, the provisions of the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA) are under direct attack. GINA was called the "first civil rights legislation of the 21st century" when it passed both the House (414-1) and Senate (95-0) with overwhelming bipartisan support and was signed into law by President George W. Bush in May of 2008. GINA prohibits health insurance companies and employers from discriminating based on a genetic predisposition to illness. Specifically, GINA prevents health insurers from canceling, denying, refusing to renew, or changing the terms or premiums of coverage based on the results of a genetic test. It also prohibits employers from making hiring, firing, promotion, and other employment-related decisions based on genetic factors.

"Once again, science takes a back seat to hyper-partisan political agendas, and the real victim will be the American people," said Slaughter. "For 14 years I worked to pass this strongly bipartisan legislation which ensures that no American faces discrimination based on genetic information. By refusing to ensure that GINA regulations are implemented, the Republican Majority jeopardizes the protection of all American citizens. One of the great accomplishments of GINA is that people no longer have to be afraid of entering into medical research studies, because their employers cannot fire them and their health insurer cannot raise their rates based on any results from a genetic test. It's deplorable that Republicans would allow a narrow political agenda to expose Americans to genetic discrimination. The only consolation is that this bill – like most of the others advanced under this Majority – has zero chance of advancing through the Senate and even less of a chance to cross the President's desk."

House Republicans are attempting to advance H.R. 4078, the so-called "Regulatory Freeze for Jobs Act." If passed, the legislation could halt development of regulations establishing greater fuel efficiency requirements at a cost of 570,000 potential new jobs. Expanded FAA safety regulations could also suffer. The legislation could hinder attempts to establish new and more stringent safety requirements for children's toys, enhanced financial oversight regulations and more modern environmental monitoring standards which were put in place as a result of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Rig catastrophe in the Gulf of Mexico.