

Congresswoman Louise M. Slaughter today joined with members of the House Trade Working Group to strongly urge a new direction in United States trade policy ahead of the WTO Ministerial Conference in Geneva on November 30th.

“My district has seen more than its share of job losses as a result of unfair foreign competition and dumping,” said Slaughter. “Once-great companies have downsized, moved to China and other countries, or simply closed their doors leaving people struggling to make ends meet. The ripple effect on small local businesses has resulted in even more job losses which is not anything Western New York can afford right now.

“On the eve of the WTO ministerial meeting, we have a tremendous opportunity to help reshape the WTO, and move the United States towards a new trade policy. It is my hope that President Obama returns from his eight days in Asia with a better understanding of the need for American workers and companies to have opportunities there. We can not continue to simply open up our markets to their goods when the deck is stacked against our workers. Even our trading partners are astonished the United States has allowed this hemorrhaging of jobs to occur without even making a peep.”

The working group also stressed their support for Slaughter’s bill the Reciprocal Market Access Act as well as the TRADE Act introduced by Congressman Michael Michaud (ME-2) of which Slaughter is a co-sponsor. These bills would ensure opportunities for American workers looking for jobs as the country recovers from the worst economic recession since the Great Depression. Summaries of both bills are included.

Slaughter was joined by Congressmen Michael Michaud of Maine and Marcy Kaptor and Betty Sutton of Ohio.

An audio clip from Congresswoman Slaughter is available at: http://www.louise.house.gov/images/audio_slaughter/2009.11.18.wto.slaughtersoundbite.mp3

H.R. 3786 Reciprocal Market Access Act

Congresswoman Slaughter is the prime sponsor and author of this bill

Summary:

- The legislation is designed to ensure that our trade negotiations achieve real and meaningful market access for our producers.
- Authority to receive or eliminate tariffs in trade agreements is tied to achieving meaningful market access for U.S. domestic producers that have identified and worked with the U.S. government to address those barriers.
- To better ensure meaningful market access, the bill requires that the President provide a certification to the Congress in advance of agreeing to a modification of any existing duty on any product, that sectoral reciprocal market access has been obtained.
- This will enhance the partnership with Congress and achieve reciprocal market access.
- It gives the government the automatic negotiated right to revoke concessions to cut tariffs if our trading partners don't implement the commitments they made to open up their markets.

- This authority, known as “snap back” authority, could be triggered by a private sector or Congressional request. The goal – and the result – will be reciprocal market access for our nation’s products.

H.R. 3012, TRADE Act

Congresswoman Slaughter is a Co-Sponsor of this important legislation

Summary:

- The bill requires the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct a comprehensive review of the major trade pacts that comprise the model on which U.S. trade agreement have been based, such as NAFTA, WTO, Jordan, and CAFTA. The GAO must also report on how the current pacts measure up to the bill’s criteria with respect to what must and must not be included in trade pacts.

- The bill spells out what should be in trade agreements including standards on: labor, environment, food and product safety, agriculture, human rights, currency anti-manipulation rules, national security, procurement, investment

- The bill also lists issues that should NOT be in trade agreements including: bans on Buy America, bans on anti-sweatshop rules, new rights for foreign investors to promote off-shoring, service sector privatization and deregulation requirements, special protections for pharmaceutical companies that limit affordable access to drugs.

- Renegotiation: Require the president to submit renegotiation plans for current trade pacts prior to negotiating new agreements and prior to congressional consideration of pending agreements.

- Establishes a Super Committee: The bill establishes a special congressional super committee chaired by the Ways and Means and Finance Committee chairs to work with the President on formulating this plan. The super committee also includes a role for the chairs and ranking members of other committees whose core jurisdiction is directly affected by today's expansive trade pacts.

Replacing Fast Track: The bill lays out criteria for a new mechanism to replace the anti-democratic Fast Track negotiating process. To obtain agreements that benefit a wider array of interests, this new process includes Congress setting readiness criteria to select future negotiating partners; mandatory negotiating objectives based on the bill's criteria of what must be and must not be in future trade pacts; and the requirements that Congress must certify that the objectives were met, and then vote on an agreement before it can be signed