

Slaughter, 10 NY Members Urge Pataki not to Veto EC Bill

With Veto, Pataki is 'Stepping out of the Mainstream'

Pataki Opposes Measure that Reduces Unwanted Pregnancies, Abortions

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise Slaughter (D-NY-28), Ranking Democrat on the House Rules Committee, was joined by ten Members of Congress from the New York delegation in sending a letter to New York Governor George Pataki, urging him to reconsider his stated intention to veto NY's emergency contraception (EC) bill. The legislation was passed through the New York State Legislature with bipartisan support.

In the letter, Rep. Slaughter and other Members of Congress stressed the importance of reproductive rights and urged Gov. Pataki to reconsider the veto and to distance himself from members of New York's Conservative Party who have tried to mislead the public on EC. They also criticized Governor Pataki for disseminating false information about the EC Bill.

The emergency contraception bill would permit women to obtain EC from health professionals, such as nurses and pharmacists, without a prescription. **EC is proven to effectively reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies and abortions, when made available in a timely manner.** □ □

Conservatives have wrongly likened emergency contraception to RU-486 in an attempt to disseminate misinformation to the public. Emergency contraception is a concentrated form of birth control pills that prevent ovulation and fertilization. Unlike RU-486, EC **does not** induce abortion.

The text of the letter follows:

April 13, 2006

August 3, 2005

The Honorable George E. Pataki

Governor of New York

Executive Chamber

Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Pataki:

As Members of the New York Congressional Delegation, we are deeply disappointed by your announced intention to veto recently approved legislation that will provide women in New York

State with access to emergency contraception (EC) without a prescription. As you are aware, both the New York State Senate and Assembly approved this bill with bipartisan support. We urge you not to oppose this measure, which would significantly reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies and abortions in the State of New York.

Access to emergency contraception is broadly supported by the medical and scientific communities, as well as the people of New York State. In fact, studies show that 72 percent of Americans support the very legislation you are inclined to veto. By vetoing this bill, you are stepping out of the mainstream and sending a message to the people of New York that effective, common sense solutions to the problems of unwanted pregnancy and abortion have no place in your Administration.

We are concerned by your office's attempts to disseminate misinformation to the public by suggesting this bill does something that it does not. Contrary to statements issued by your office, this bill does not relate to an application pending before the FDA on over-the counter sales of EC to women 16 years or older. Instead, this bill will permit women to obtain this medication from health professionals, such as nurses or pharmacists, without a prescription. It will not permit widespread over-the-counter access to emergency contraception.

We also urge you to distance yourself from comments made by the state's Conservative Party that trivializes the importance of access to EC by suggesting it would be as easily accessible to young women as "bubble gum".

Each year, thousands of women in New York, including many teenagers, face the terrible burden of unintended pregnancies, with approximately 164,600 ending in abortion. Studies have shown that effectively preventing unwanted pregnancies is the best way to reduce abortion rates. If taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex, emergency contraception can prevent 89 percent of unintended pregnancies. Therefore, easier access to emergency contraception would significantly reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies and abortions throughout the State of New York. EC is safe and cost effective. Moreover, emergency contraception is often the only option for thousands of rape victims, and is widely recognized as an integral part of comprehensive and compassionate emergency treatment for sexual assault survivors. Like the legislation you signed last year that allows victims of sexual assault to receive EC at the hospital, this bill will only permit health professionals to dispense EC.

In the past, you have been a supporter of reproductive rights. Today, you have the opportunity to respect the will of the people and support a responsible and effective solution to the growing problem of unwanted pregnancies and abortions. We urge you not to put politics before science and women's health. Instead help make history for New York, and for women all across America by signing this bill into law.

Sincerely,

Members of Congress:

Louise M. Slaughter

Gary L. Ackerman

Tim Bishop

Joseph Crowley

Maurice Hinchey

Steve J. Israel

Nita M. Lowey

Carolyn Maloney

Carolyn McCarthy

Nydia Velázquez

Anthony D. Weiner

