

Congresswoman Louise M. Slaughter (NY-28), Chairwoman of the House Committee on Rules, opened the floor debate on the Implementing Management for Performance and Related Reforms to Obtain Value in Every Acquisition Act of 2010, otherwise known as the “IMPROVE” Act. The bipartisan IMPROVE Acquisition Act will reform the defense acquisition system to save American taxpayers \$135 billion over the next five years and make sure that the men and women who are risking their lives to safeguard our country get the proper equipment they need to do their jobs and protect themselves on the battlefield.

“The \$640 toilet seat is now the stuff of legend but sadly it’s just the tip of the iceberg,” said Slaughter.

The IMPROVE Act passed with strong bi-partisan support by a vote of 417-3.

“Billions of taxpayer dollars and the trust of our brave troops depend on this,” Slaughter said urging her colleagues in the Senate to approve this legislation that removes waste, fraud and abuse from vital government programs.

Slaughter has been a leader on this issue consistently pushing for the equipment our troops need and increased transparency for taxpayers.

“For my part, one of my proudest efforts during my career in Congress has been to force the Pentagon to acknowledge that some of the testing done on body armor for troops during an early part of the war was deeply flawed,” Slaughter said today on the House floor. “My work on this issue grew out of an 2006 audit that found that 80 percent of marines killed in Iraq due to upper body wounds could have survived if they had extra body armor. We’re still working with the military on this issue and may never know the full extent of the problem. Thankfully however, my work did accomplish one thing; the military agreed no more poorly managed deals for outside contractors to test the body armor. When it comes to the safety of troops, it’s foolish to put the bid out to the lowest priced contractor.”

**The IMPROVE Act would:**

- Clean up defense acquisition spending, saving taxpayers an estimated \$27 billion a year and expediting the process to get the necessary equipment to our troops.
- Place curbs on the DOD's acquisition system, which in the past has placed a heavy burden on both taxpayers and the men and women in uniform.
- The bill cleans up waste, fraud and abuse in the defense acquisition system through four key common-sense reforms: building a better accountability system, improving the management of the acquisition workforce, creating an auditable financial management system at DOD, and expanding and strengthening the industrial base to enhance competition and gain access to more technology.

Video of Rep. Slaughter's statement on the House floor is available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvVucPxNYkU>

Below is a copy of Rep. Slaughter's prepared remarks:

Mr. Speaker, over the years we have watched in horror as countless stories revealed flaws in the military's procurement operation. Disappointment with the way the Department of Defense manages the money we appropriate it reflects poorly not just on the Pentagon but on Congress as well.

The \$640 toilet seat is now the stuff of legend but sadly it's just the tip of the iceberg. In recent years, excesses stemming from the ill-considered rush towards privatization championed by the previous Administration have become increasingly common.

This push to contract out nearly every part of the military's mission has inevitably led to waste, fraud and abuse involving some of the biggest corporate names in this country.

Sadly, I believe that many years from now historians will associate a significant part of the war in Iraq with wasteful and poorly managed contracts that made private companies millions - often at the expense of our own men and women in uniform and certainly of taxpayers.

Two years ago in Congress, I was here on the floor as the House debated H.R. 1362, the Accountability in Contracting Act; that too was intended to save taxpayer money. Earlier in the 110th Congress, I worked with my dear friend Ms. Schakowsky on H.R. 897, the Iraq and Afghanistan Contractor Sunshine Act.

I hesitate to say that those and other efforts towards contracting reform have been unsuccessful. Clearly, we have made significant reforms and part of our work in Congress involves regular and diligent oversight - it's a never-ending process.

For my part, one of my proudest efforts during my career in Congress has been to force the Pentagon to acknowledge that some of the testing done on body armor for troops during an early part of the war was deeply flawed.

My work on this issue grew out of an 2006 audit that found that 80 percent of marines killed in Iraq due to upper body wounds could have survived if they had extra body armor.

We're still working with the military on this issue and may never know the full extent of the problem. Thankfully however, my work did accomplish one thing; the military agreed no more poorly managed deals for outside contractors to test the body armor.

All current and future body armor testing will be conducted internally by DoD's Department of Testing and Evaluation with strict standards to ensure that our troops receive nothing but the highest quality body armor.

When it comes to the safety of troops, it's foolish to put the bid out to the lowest priced contractor.

But time marches on and today we have moved into a new chapter of oversight and reform. This morning we are bringing up an important piece of legislation intended to help the Pentagon reform inefficient procurement operations.

It's called the Implementing Management for Performance and Related Reforms to Obtain Value in Every Acquisition Act of 2010, otherwise known as the "IMPROVE" act.

This bill will help the Defense Department immediately crack down on cost overruns and lax oversight of contractors. Not only that, but this bill should help reduce our dangerous reliance on outside companies to do so many varied functions on behalf of the military.

It's hard to overstate how important this bill is. My colleague Mr. Conaway of Texas, who is the Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee Defense Acquisition Panel, offered the following testimonial on how urgent the need is for contracting and acquisition reform.

He said: "The Department of Defense is the largest agency in the Federal Government, owning 86 percent of the Government's assets, estimated at \$4.6 trillion. Over the last two decades, millions of dollars have been spent by DOD in the quest to obtain auditable financial statements." Yet getting those numbers has proven elusive.

Not any more. This bill mandates that the Pentagon consider shifting work away from contractors if they don't meet cost goals. It also sets up a new system of cost objectives and schedules which DOD procurement officers would have to follow. The bill says that by 2017, Pentagon agencies must prepare records that can be audited and draft a new policy that would reward those who don't meet requirements.

These are simple, sensible reforms that the American people can understand and appreciate.

No matter what anyone thinks of the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, we all know that the men and women who are serving overseas rely on equipment and deserve to know that their funds are not being squandered.

Another bright note on this legislation: when it was approved by the Armed Services Committee, the vote was 56-0. Such bi-partisanship is rare in the House these days and I am happy to speak out on a bill that all of us can agree on.

Although there is not currently any pending movement on this bill in the Senate, it's my hope that a decisive and strong bi-partisan vote today on this bill will spur the Senate into action. Billions of taxpayer dollars and the trust of our brave troops' depends on it.