

WASHINGTON – Congresswoman Louise Slaughter, Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee (NY-28), and Congressman Tim Walz (MN-1), today wrote to House Majority Leader Eric Cantor blasting his interference with the progress of bipartisan legislation that would finally ban insider trading amongst members of Congress and their staffs, and shed sunlight on the political intelligence industry.

Last night, according to Politico, Cantor reportedly asked House Financial Services Chairman Spencer Bachus to postpone the markup his committee had scheduled on the Stop Trading on Congressional Knowledge Act, or STOCK Act, which would prohibit Members of Congress and federal employees from profiting from nonpublic information they obtain via their official positions, and require greater oversight of the growing "political intelligence" industry.

Meanwhile, the STOCK Act today gained the support of a majority of House members with 221 co-sponsors, including 75 Republicans.

"I am truly dismayed by the decision to delay the mark-up of the STOCK Act," said Slaughter. "This is straightforward, bipartisan legislation that has the support of the majority of the House. It harms no one and it doesn't cost a penny. There's no excuse for not moving this bill expeditiously."

"The time to bring the STOCK Act to the floor is now. We can now pass this bill. We need to ensure the people of this country know that lawmakers are working in their best interests, and not the interests of their own bank account. Americans need to know that their elected leaders play by the same rules as everyone else," said Walz.

Slaughter and Walz's letter to Cantor is available below.

Slaughter and Walz were joined today in a press conference by Reps. Carolyn Maloney (NY-14) and the bill's first Republican co-sponsor Walter Jones (NC-3). Both Maloney and Jones were early supporters of the STOCK Act, two of the nine prior to the 60 Minutes piece that caused the explosion on interest starting Sunday, November 13.

"This action by the Republican leadership to stall the STOCK Act is yet another example of this Congress not wanting to do anything-- let alone something bipartisan, something with massive public support, something as common-sense as banning insider trading in Congress," Maloney said.

"This bill would send a clear message that Congress is committed to playing by the same rules as all Americans," said Jones. "Congress should be proactive in taking action to restore the public's trust, and passing this bill would be a step in the right direction."

More information on the STOCK Act including its legislative history is included below.

Slaughter and Walz's Letter to Cantor

December 8, 2011

The Honorable Eric Cantor

Office of the Majority Leader

H-329, The Capitol

Washington, DC 20515

Majority Leader Cantor:

We write to express our deep concern regarding press reports that you have directed Chairman Bachus not to move forward with a planned markup of H.R. 1148, the Stop Trading On Congressional Knowledge (STOCK) Act.

As the lead proponents of the STOCK Act, we were pleased to learn of your support for increased disclosure of lawmakers' finances, as reported by numerous press reports. The 218 bipartisan cosponsors of the STOCK Act strongly agree Members of Congress and their staff "should be held to a higher standard." Therefore, rather than intervening to slow the progress of the legislation, we urge you to speed this bipartisan effort to passage to ensure Members of Congress and staff cannot use their positions of power for personal profit and to shed sunlight on the lucrative political intelligence industry. The STOCK Act seeks to address this problem and in doing so restore the public trust in Congress.

The STOCK Act is a comprehensive approach to prohibit congressional material nonpublic information from being used to benefit Members, staff and the political intelligence industry. The legislation prohibits congressional insider trading through Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Commodities Future Trading Commission (CFTC) and House Ethics rules, and provides enforcement tools through timely financial disclosures and the registration of political intelligence firms.

We are disappointed you requested the House Financial Services Committee postpone its scheduled markup next week. While we strongly support efforts to strengthen and improve the STOCK Act, those efforts should not be an excuse to hold this legislation hostage. The markup is an integral step in the legislative process that will allow Members the opportunity to offer amendments to improve the bill and should not be delayed. The Senate Committee of jurisdiction is proceeding with its markup next week and the House Financial Services Committee should do the same. Failure to pass the STOCK Act this session will only serve to further erode the public trust and ensure single digit Congressional approval ratings continue.

No one should be above the law. It is time we hold Congress to the same standard as the rest of the American public when it comes to insider trading. Our constituents honored us with the privilege of serving them in this Body to serve their best interest, not our own pocketbooks.

We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,