

March 10, 2005- Slaughter Receives Assurance of Federal Meeting with Peace Bridge Authority

Rep. Slaughter Receives Assurance of Federal Meeting with Peace Bridge Authority

Gathering will Initiate Process to Ease Bridge Congestion

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (NY-28) has received assurances from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) that a cancelled February 17th meeting with the Peace Bridge Authority will be rescheduled. Officials expect to conduct the meeting by the last week of the month.

After the initial cancellation, both federal agencies fell under increasing pressure to reschedule from organizations and government officials connected to the talks. Rep. Slaughter has been especially concerned about this issue and earlier this week wrote to Homeland Security Secretary Chertoff and CBP Commissioner Bonner to request they reschedule this meeting as quickly as possible. The meeting is necessary to move forward on the reverse inspection pilot program announced by former DHS Secretary Tom Ridge and Canadian Deputy Prime Minister Anne McLellan late last year. Moreover, without this meeting, further development of the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) needed for the Peace Bridge expansion project could be delayed.

Upon receiving the assurances of a future meeting, Rep. Slaughter was enthusiastic. "I am very happy that the Peace Bridge Authority will have the chance to meet with the necessary federal organizations in the weeks ahead," Slaughter said. She added, "I appreciate how important it is to move the Peace Bridge project forward as quickly as possible, and that is what I intend to do."

Traffic congestion at the Peace Bridge has been a long-standing problem for local Canadian and New York residents who rely upon it for their business and personal lives. Security requirements for a new Canadian plaza at the Buffalo-Fort Erie border crossing must be established by the Peace Bridge Authority and the DHS before any planned development of the facility can begin.

"We need to keep the pressure on the Homeland Security Department and Customs and Border Protection in order to make certain they keep their promise to the people of Western New York and Canada to improve this vital means of transportation," Slaughter said. She added, "Too many people are counting on these improvements to the Peace Bridge to let them fall by the wayside. We can't, and we won't, let that happen."