

April 13 -2005 - Chairman Dreier, Reps. Diaz-Balart, Sessions, Putnam, Capito, Bishop ...

Chairman Dreier, Reps. Diaz-Balart, Sessions, Putnam, Capito, Bishop & Gingrey Vote Against Disabled Veterans, the Sick and Victims of Identity Theft

Republican Members of House Rules Committee Kill Amendments, Ramming Bankruptcy Bill Through at the Expense of Those in Need

Washington, DC - Republican Members of the House Rules Committee voted today in Committee to kill several amendments to S-256, the "Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act of 2005." These amendments were designed to protect veterans who have recently returned from Iraq or Afghanistan, families who have experienced a catastrophic medical event, and people who are the victims of identity theft.

On a straight party-line vote, Republicans rejected an open rule, which would have given the Democratic Members who brought more than 30 thoughtful amendments to the Rules Committee the chance to have their ideas debated on the House floor.

The Republican Members also voted against exempting the men and women fighting for our country in Iraq and Afghanistan from the bankruptcy bill's so-called "means test." They opposed an amendment by Rep. Marty Meehan of Massachusetts (amendment # 23) that would protect disabled veterans who have developed financial problems due to their combat service and they voted against another amendment (amendment # 12) requiring credit counseling agencies to provide free services to men and women who have recently left the military after serving in combat zones.

"Our veterans deserve so much more. This legislation will have a horrible impact on our brave boys and girls returning home from military service. We should be making their transition back into private life as easy as possible. This legislation throws up roadblocks and makes that transition all the more difficult," said Rep. Louise M. Slaughter, Ranking Member of the House Committee on Rules.

The Republican Members also voted against assisting people who are forced into bankruptcy as a result of identity theft. They opposed an amendment offered by Rep. Adam Schiff of California (amendment # 11) that would protect consumers who find themselves with large debts because criminals have stolen their Social Security numbers and other personal identification information.

"We all see the headlines: Identity theft poses an enormous financial risk to the average American. No one deserves a bill for someone else's crime, but the Republican majority seems to think so. Their legislation would punish victims of identity theft, and their refusal to adopt the simple fix proposed today raises real questions about who they are fighting for," said Rep. Doris Matsui, a Democratic Member of the Rules Committee.

The Republican Members even voted against several amendments intended to protect people who file bankruptcy because they or a family member are experiencing a serious, costly illness. For example, they opposed an amendment offered by Rep. Zoe Lofgren of California (amendment # 12) that would protect people whose medical costs total more than 50% of their annual income.

"With medical costs soaring and so many working families being cut off from health insurance it is unconscionable that Rules Committee Republicans would allow this legislation through without protecting families forced into bankruptcy because of medical expenses," stated Rep. Slaughter. She added, "Where are their values? Where is their morality?"

The "Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act of 2005," (S-256) is expected to go to the House Floor tomorrow morning for a vote.