

April 21, 2005 - Rep. Slaughter to Ethics Chairman Hastings:

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"There Can Be No Compromise On Ethics"

Ethics and integrity of Congress too important to Compromise.

Washington, DC - Today, Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Committee on Rules, the committee with jurisdiction over the rules of the Ethics Committee, released the following statement in response to Ethics Committee Chairman Doc Hastings' unacceptable compromise proposal:

"The notion that Mr. Hastings would use the creation of a Sub-Committee investigation into DeLay's unethical activities as a bargaining chip to get the Committee to reorganize is offensive. Deal making on ethics issues is as outrageous as the Ethics Rule changes orchestrated by the Majority in the first place.

The Committee has been deadlocked over the rules governing the House ethics processes, which still lay in waste. This is a bigger issue than just Tom DeLay.

If the Republican majority wants to regain their credibility on Ethics it will take more than an offer for a 'kangaroo court' investigation of the Majority Leader under weakened ethics rules.

The only acceptable solution is to reverse the rule changes they rammed through the House on the first day of Congress. Nothing less.

By definition, we cannot compromise on ethics and still be ethical. Any offer of such is itself a further compromise of the integrity of this institution."

Background:

This is not the first time Republicans have created the illusion of a compromise when faced with enormous criticism from the American people on the Ethics Rules of Congress. In the opening days of Congress, Republicans were lambasted for attempting to change their conference rules to protect members of their own leadership (cough...DeLay) should they ever be indicted. Republicans also proposed removing a long standing provision of House Ethics Rules that stipulated members of Congress must conduct themselves, "at all times in a manner that shall reflect creditably on the House". Faced with overwhelming criticism they dropped both of these provisions creating the smoke screen of defeat only to hammer through dramatic changes to Ethics Rules days later. These changes to the rules are what Democrats in Congress are fighting to overturn. They included the following:

- Created a rule that would dismiss any complaint the evenly split, bi-partisan Ethics Committee deadlocks on. This measure provides an effective 'veto' for the Majority over any ethics complaint filed. The current language places the item into an automatic investigative subcommittee if agreement cannot be reached in the allotted time frame.

- Changed the rules that would eliminate the 45-day deadline for action by the Ethics Committee on any complaint before them. This change would enable the committee to "bury" politically sensitive ethics complaints indefinitely. This important reform the Republicans want to dismantle was created in the interest of providing timely resolutions to ethics complaints before the committee.

