

## April 27, 2005 - Rep. Slaughter Reacts to ...

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GOP Ethics Retreat

Republicans Deserve No Pat on Back for About Face on Ethics

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Committee on Rules, released the following statement, which she will deliver on the House floor during the upcoming debate on the Ethics Reversal rule:

Excerpts:

"The Republican Majority does not deserve a pat on the back for their apparent about face. As I said earlier, we should always remember that it's easy to make the right decision when the whole world is watching. What defines our character is what we do when no one is watching."

"This bill represents a true victory for the American People and provides some hope that the integrity of this body, which has been so badly tarnished by the actions of this Majority, can one day be restored."

"There is concern that the rules changes the Majority is proposing today will not include measures to ensure that the staff of the Ethics committee remains non- partisan. Something that is critical if the Ethics Committee is to retain any credibility moving forward...even in defeat it seems this Majority has no shame."

Full Text:

"M. Speaker, I thank the Gentleman from California, Mr. Dreier for yielding and I ask for unanimous consent to revise and extend my remarks.

M. Speaker, This bill represents a true victory for the American People and provides some hope that the integrity of this body, which has been so badly tarnished by the actions of this Majority, can one day be restored. As a child, my parents taught me that integrity means doing what's right when no one is looking. Well, four months ago, when they thought no one was looking, the Republican Majority of this House passed a Rules package that gutted the House Ethics standards and effectively neutered the House Ethics Committee. The changes were made in an obvious attempt to protect one man from further prosecution or investigation by the Ethics Committee.

Four months later, after the world has been awakened to the unethical brand of "sweep it under the rug" politics of this Majority, the Speaker has finally relented to the public pressure and agreed to re-instate the ethics rules that have governed this house for years, rules that should have been governing this House during the 109th Congress from the very start. You know, it is easy to do the right thing when the whole world is watching...well, today the whole world is watching and it appears that the Republican Majority, with their back against the wall, may finally do the right thing. It appears as though they may heed my call, and the calls of Congressman Mollohan and many others...It appears that they may heed the overwhelming call of the American People and return this House to the Ethics Rules of the 108th Congress...and not just a section from part A or a smidgen of part B...All of them.

Even now, at this low point for the Republican leadership, there is concern that the Rules changes the Majority is proposing today will not include measures to ensure that the staff of the Ethics committee remains non- partisan. Something that is critical if the Ethics Committee is to retain any credibility moving forward. Even in defeat it seems this Majority has no shame.

I will say, that whatever the outcome today, the Republican Majority does not deserve a pat on the back for their apparent about face. As I said earlier, we should always remember that it's easy to make the right decision when the whole world is watching. What defines our character is what we do when no one is watching. Well we saw clearly what this majority is all about. We have been witness to it for the past four months...and every day we discover new abuses of the Rules by the Republican leadership, and new abuses of the Democratic process here in the House.

We all owe Congressman Mollohan a debt of gratitude for his resoluteness and steadfastness on this issue and for having the courage to fight against this clear attempt by the Republicans to subvert our democratic process and destroy the principles of ethics and integrity in this House.

Let us hope the American people will not soon forget what this majority did, and the Herculean effort it has required to convince them to reverse course."

Background (Release from April 21, 2005)

"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.