

june 30 2005 - House Passes Slaughter Amendment Aimed at Protecting Children from Lead Poisoning

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Washington, DC - Yesterday, Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-Fairport), Ranking Democrat on the House Rules Committee, offered an amendment with Reps. Lee Terry (R-NE) and Nydia M. Velázquez (D-NY) to reinstate \$48 million for the crucial lead-based paint remediation grant program.

The funds will help HUD's Office of Lead Hazard Control provide grants to cities and states to correct serious lead hazards in homes. These grants are targeted to individuals vulnerable to the effects of lead poisoning, particularly children under the age of 6.

"This funding is critical to achieving our national goal of eradicating childhood lead poisoning," said Rep. Slaughter. She added, "The passage of this amendment shows our commitment... our sincere belief that states and local communities must have the resources they need to protect children from lead poisoning and the horrible medical problems that come along with it."

Lead poisoning affects nearly 434,000 American children between the ages of 1 and 5. In Monroe County, twelve hundred children fall victim to lead poisoning each year. One in three children tested for lead poisoning in Erie County have blood lead levels that are considered dangerous. To reduce the incidence of lead poisoning Congresswoman Slaughter has actively supported district applications for HUD's Lead Hazard Control Grants, which has resulted in millions of federal dollars for lead abatement programs throughout the district.

"The Lead Hazard Control grants work, but only if they are available," said Rep. Slaughter. "Already, Monroe County had been forced to stop accepting applications from homeowners hoping to participate in its Lead Program, because demand far outpaces available resources. That is why these funds are so important," she continued.

Last year's, HUD's Office of Lead Hazard Control was unable to fund two-thirds of the requests it received due to a lack of funding. This year, the Office was slated to be cut by \$47 million. The dramatic cuts would have further reduced the number of grants awarded, and left children exposed to lead hazards.

"Without adequate funding to prevent lead poisoning, American children will continue to suffer from asthma, brain damage, and seizures. They will continue to be at risk of hearing loss, developmental delays, osteoporosis, and kidney damage simply by breathing the air in their own homes," said Rep. Slaughter. "My only hope is that this legislation will make it through the Senate and Conference as amended. Only then can we honestly say we've done our part to protect our most vulnerable from the dangerous effects of lead poisoning," she concluded.