

July 11 2005 - Slaughter Urges Pataki to Ensure Access to Emergency Contraception

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Bill Passes State Legislature and Now Awaits Governor's Action

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-Fairport), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee and co-chair of the Bipartisan Congressional Pro-Choice Caucus, sent a letter on Friday, July 8th to Governor George Pataki urging him to sign New York's Emergency Contraception bill into law.

"Signing this bill will significantly reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies and abortions in New York, and ensure that victims of sexual assault receive proper medical attention, all while protecting women's basic rights," wrote Rep. Slaughter in her letter.

She added, "This is an opportunity for New York to transcend the rancor of partisan debate and chart a new, bold course that addresses the real public health problems at hand, not just the politics in play."

Full text of Rep. Slaughter's letter to Gov. Pataki:

July 8, 2005

The Honorable George E. Pataki

Governor of New York

Executive Chamber

Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Pataki:

As co-chair of the Bipartisan Congressional Pro-Choice Caucus, I am writing regarding recently approved legislation that will provide women in New York State with access to emergency contraception without a prescription. As you are aware, both the New York State Senate and Assembly passed this bill with bipartisan support.

This critical legislation will now be forwarded to your desk, and I urge you to sign it into law without delay. Signing this bill will significantly reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies and abortions in New York, and ensure that victims of

sexual assault receive proper medical attention, all while protecting women's basic rights.

This is an opportunity for New York to transcend the rancor of partisan debate and chart a new, bold course that addresses the real public health problems at hand, not just the politics in play. Likewise, a veto would send an equally profound, yet damaging message to the people of New York: that effective, common sense solutions to the problems of unwanted pregnancy and abortion have no place in your Administration.

Each year, thousands of women in New York, including many teenagers, face the terrible burden of unintended pregnancy. Annually, 58 percent of pregnancies in New York State are not planned. Two-thirds of these, or about 164,600 unintended pregnancies, end in abortion. Studies have shown that effectively preventing unwanted pregnancies is the best way to reduce abortion rates. If taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex, emergency contraception can prevent 89 percent of unintended pregnancies. Therefore, easier access to emergency contraception would significantly reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies and abortions throughout the State of New York.

Scientists agree that emergency contraception does not cause abortion, but instead emergency contraception acts primarily by stopping the release of an egg from the ovary. Furthermore, emergency contraception is safe. It has low-toxicity, no potential for overdose or addiction; there are no important drug interactions, and it is not harmful to an existing pregnancy. Moreover, emergency contraception is often the only option for thousands of rape victims, and is widely recognized as an integral part of comprehensive and compassionate emergency treatment for sexual assault survivors.

Finally, emergency contraception is cost effective. In a 2003 report, the New York State Comptroller found that the state could trim nearly half a billion dollars from its health care expenditures if emergency contraception was made widely available.

Access to emergency contraception is broadly supported by the medical and scientific communities, as well as the people of New York State. The bottom line is, if we want to reduce the number of unintended pregnancies and abortions,

we must permit easier access to emergency contraception. I urge you to respect the will of the people and help change the debate in America, away from polarizing rhetoric and toward common sense solutions that are proven to reduce unwanted pregnancy and abortion. Help make history for New York, and for women all across America and sign this bill into law.

Sincerely,

/s

Louise M. Slaughter

Member of Congress

cc: Senate Majority Leader Joseph L. Bruno

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver