

July 26 2005 - CAFTA Goes to Rules at Last Minute, Slaughter Cautions GOP on Abusive Tactics Ranking

CAFTA Goes to Rules at Last Minute, Slaughter Cautions GOP on Abusive Tactics Ranking Democrat Raises Concern Over Looming Debate

on Trade Proposal, Sites Medicare Debate in 108th Congress

Washington, DC- Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, expressed deep concern today that as debate on CAFTA moves forward, Republican Leaders in the House will once again bend and manipulate the rules of debate to force their will on Congress and the American People, just as they did during the Medicare debate of the 108th Congress.

"I would warn my friends in the Majority that we dare not see a return to the unethical tactics used by the Republican Leadership during the Medicare debate of the 108th Congress.

Under the regular rules of the House we should have twenty hours of debate and a fifteen minute vote on this free trade agreement - not the other way around. This issue deserves a thorough debate and fair vote.

There should be no votes held open for three hours. There should be no unethical arm twisting on the House floor. The American people are watching this time.

We cannot afford to once again have the democratic process cast aside in the name of special interests and dirty politics."

Republicans got off on the wrong foot this afternoon when, through emergency procedures, they gave Democrats just 1 hour of notice that the Rules Committee would be holding a 6:00pm hearing on CAFTA.

House rules provide for 20 hours of debate on free trade agreements. The majority is expected to greatly limit that amount of time.

Background:

During the Medicare debate for the 108th Congress, The Majority unethically held open the vote on final passage for 3 hours when it became obvious the measure was about to fail- the longest period in House history.

Serious allegations of bribery were also made against the Majority Leadership by then Republican Congressman Nick Smith. Majority Leader DeLay was later publicly admonished by the House Ethics Committee for his unethical conduct on the House floor during the debate in connection with the Smith scandal.

The House Leadership also broke the House Rules and allowed a cabinet member onto the House floor during a vote in order to twist member's arms, for the first time in the history of the House of Representatives.