

## July 27 2005 - Rules Committee Republicans Eliminate Debate at Every Turn

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Ranking Member Slaughter Condemns Abuse of Power

on CAFTA, Medical Malpractice and Chinese Trade

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY), Ranking Member of the House Committee on Rules, condemned Rules Committee Republicans Tuesday evening for blocking amendments and drastically slashing debate on three important measures before Congress: CAFTA, Medical Malpractice and Chinese Trade.

"In an act of complete cowardice the Republican Majority has yet again stifled the voice of the people...cutting off debate and blocking common sense amendments to a variety of important issues," said Rep. Slaughter. She continued asking, "What is it that the Republican Majority is afraid of? Members of Congress speaking their minds and voting their consciences? While this isn't surprising, it is absolutely reprehensible."

CAFTA

Republicans got off on the wrong foot when, through emergency procedures, they gave Democrats just 1 hour of notice that the Rules Committee would be holding a hearing on CAFTA. To make matters worse they have only allotted two hours of debate on the issue when the standing rules of the House allow for twenty. On a party line vote, Republicans on the Rules committee rejected a Democratic compromise of 8 hours.

"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," said Rep. Slaughter.

## MEDICAL MALPRACTICE

In a move aimed at lining the pockets of the insurance industry at the expense of the sick and injured, Republicans on the Rules Committee allotted just two hours of debate on controversial medical malpractice reform legislation.

On a party line vote, Republicans once again blocked any amendments from being considered on the measure, including an amendment that would have taken steps to weed out frivolous lawsuits, required insurance companies to pass their savings on to health care providers, and provided targeted assistance to the physicians and communities who need it the most. This is the third time in 3 years Rules Committee Republicans voted to prevent any House Member from offering any amendment to this legislation

"The sick and injured need our assistance, not the big insurance companies," said Rep. Slaughter. She continued, "We know where the Republicans stand. Its no surprise they don't want this issue thoroughly debated."

Committee Republicans rejected all 15 of the amendments Members brought to the Rules Committee and, in addition, they rejected an amendment I offered to consider the bill under an open rule.

Over the past 3 years, Republicans have rejected a total of 67 amendments to this medical malpractice legislation.

## CHINESE TRADE

After losing their attempt to pass the legislation under suspension, Republicans are pushing H.R. 3283 yet again to sweeten the pot for those uneasy about supporting CAFTA. Unfortunately for the American people, the Republican Leadership in Congress has yet again shut the door on deliberative democracy providing just ONE hour of debate and no opportunity to amend the legislation.

"After striking out under suspension, Republicans are at it again and like before they are shutting the door on debate and amendments," said Rep. Slaughter. She concluded, "It was certainly some night for the Republicans... on three important issues they've only allotted five hours of debate and completely eliminated our ability to offer any constructive changes. Their cowardice is staggering."