

Sept 7 2005 - After 5 Weeks Vacation...

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Hurricane Katrina Response Version 2.0:

40 Total Minutes of Consideration, No Amendments Allowed, No Accountability Sought, Home for the Weekend...Your Republican Congress

Washington, DC - Tonight, after five weeks vacation, in the wake of what is quickly becoming the worst natural disaster in American history, the Republican Leadership in the House of Representatives made the decision to limit floor consideration of the Federal response to Hurricane Katrina to just forty minutes.

Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, led Democratic opposition to a Rules Committee vote this evening that makes the \$52 Billion Supplemental Appropriation bill, a Suspension Rule that will prevent any amendments from being offered and allow for a grand total of 40 minutes of consideration. The bill, which enjoys broad bipartisan support, is expected to pass on the House floor tomorrow.

Republicans on a party line voted to deny Rep. Slaughter's amendment that would have allowed for a modest 2 hours of discussion and opened up the measure to be amended.

Democrats on the Rules Committee and in attendance at the hearing passionately implored the Republicans to allow amendments, which would enable consideration of critical and urgent measures, such as which areas and to which agencies relief dollars were most needed and how to restructure FEMA so that it would be more effective. Members also noted that no one had yet to even see a copy of the legislation.

"We've been on vacation for five weeks. Now, in our first week back, the Republican Leadership would rather duck and run than discuss what's happened in the wake of Hurricane Katrina," said Rep. Slaughter. She continued, "Life in the Gulf Coast is no vacation. The Federal Government failed the American people in its initial response to this horrible disaster and by their actions; the Republican Leadership is once again showing that their priorities are out of sync with the needs of so many hard working families."

"It is this very lack of accountability in government which ensured that our disaster response would be a bigger disaster than the hurricane itself. Yet here they go again, completely unfazed in their determination to eliminate debate, consideration and accountability from the Congress and the Federal government. No one has even seen a copy of the bill."

"If the Republican Majority cannot feel the anger all over America at the Federal response to this disaster, they must be completely tone deaf to the reality so many people are now facing. No food, water, homes or jobs. The lives of loved ones lost," Said Rep. Slaughter. "They want answers and they want their Congressional Representatives working hard. But the best this leadership can give their voice is forty minutes. What are they afraid of hearing?" she concluded.