

Sept 28 2005 - Slaughter Condemns Hastert's Selection of David Dreier as Majority Leader

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Rules Chairman Institutionalized Culture of Corruption Exhibited by Rep. DeLay

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, today condemned Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert's selection of Congressman David Dreier to be the interim Majority Leader of the Republican Party. Tom DeLay stepped down from that position following his indictment at the hands of Travis County District Attorney Ronnie Earl.

"As the Chairman of the Rules Committee, David Dreier opened the 109th Congress by helping to force through devastating changes to the ethics rules in the House, changes which, for the first time in history, had been authored without any input from the Minority Party," Rep. Slaughter said. "And he did it for one reason and one reason only: to protect Tom DeLay," she added.

"The idea that a Representative who has just been indicted for an ethical violation should be replaced by someone whose first order of business was to make it harder to prosecute such violations - it shows how little Republicans care about responsible or respectable government," Rep. Slaughter said.

"David Dreier is completely unacceptable for the job," she concluded.

BACKGROUND

At the beginning of the 109th Congress, the Republican Majority passed a new set of ethics rules which were designed to protect Majority Leader DeLay from being held accountable for his past actions. In the 108th Congress, he had been censured three times for violating ethics rules.

The Rules package passed on January 4, 2005, a package which Rep. Dreier ushered through the Rules Committee, designated that any ethics complaint not ruled on by the Ethics Committee within 45 days of being brought before it would be automatically dismissed. Because the Committee is evenly split between Democrats and Republicans, this rule was designed to give Republicans the power to block any ethics complaints against Members of their party by intentionally deadlocking the Committee. (Prior to the rules change, deadlocked complaints were automatically referred to a sub-committee for further consideration.) Furthermore, for the first time on Congressional history, the Rules changes were authored by the Majority Party without incorporating any input from Members in the Minority. Previous changes had been made in a thoroughly bi-partisan way.

In April, the Republican leadership, bowing to pressure from the public and the Democrats, reversed this rule in what was an effective admission of its illegitimacy.