

Sept 28 2005 - Slaughter: DeLay's Indictment First Chink in Republican Armor of Corruption

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Ranking Member Calls for Fully Operating Ethics Committee

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Committee on Rules, issued the following statement upon hearing the news that Majority Leader Tom DeLay has been indicted on felony conspiracy charges in connection with his role in the TRMPAC money laundering scheme:

"The criminal indictment of Tom DeLay is the first chink in the armor of corruption that has so clouded, consumed and controlled the Republican Majority over the past few years," said Rep. Slaughter. She continued, "Mr. DeLay's criminal indictment is a vindication for all those organizations and individuals who have fought to shine the light of day on the corruption of this Republican leadership. The fact that 9 months into this Congress we still don't have an operating Ethics Committee is further evidence that Congressional Republicans have no interest in changing their unethical ways."

BACKGROUND

In the opening days of Congress, Republicans were lambasted for attempting to change their conference rules to protect members of their own leadership should they ever be indicted. Republicans also proposed removing a long standing provision of House Ethics Rules that stipulated members of Congress must conduct themselves, "at all times in a manner that shall reflect creditably on the House". Faced with overwhelming criticism they dropped both of these provisions creating the smoke screen of defeat only to hammer through dramatic changes to Ethics Rules days later. These changes to the rules are what Democrats in Congress successfully fought to overturn for several months. They included the following:

- Created a rule that would dismiss any complaint the evenly split, bi-partisan Ethics Committee deadlocks on. This measure provided an effective 'veto' for the Majority over any ethics complaint filed. The current language places the item into an automatic investigative subcommittee if agreement cannot be reached in the allotted time frame.

- Changed the rules that would eliminate the 45-day deadline for action by the Ethics Committee on any complaint before them. This change would enable the committee to "bury" politically sensitive ethics complaints indefinitely. This important reform the Republicans want to dismantle was created in the interest of providing timely resolutions to ethics complaints before the committee.