

## Nov 17 2005 - Slaughter Leads Rules Debate in Opposition to Republican Budget Reconciliation Bill

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Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, tonight led Democratic opposition to the budget reconciliation bill brought before the House.

Excerpts from speech as prepared:

"As this Republican leadership continues to flail and flounder there can only be one conclusion drawn from this budget reconciliation: that this Majority has come to stand for nothing at all - except for making the rich richer while the rest of America pays the bills."

"Because at its core that is what this budget does, and it is what this budget was intentionally designed to do... cut vital programs and increase the national debt in order to create tax cuts for the rich and the super rich."

"My friends, I know that together, America can do better than this. We can do better than turning the American dream into a privilege for the few, instead of a right for all. We must do better, and we can start today by rejecting this bill."

"The Majority deliberately chose to separate this bill from its planned passage of 56 billion dollars in tax cuts for the rich, more than half of which goes to the super rich - those with incomes over a million dollars per year. And without missing a beat, they are trying to finance their tax cut, as well as our skyrocketing debt, on the backs of the poor, the disabled, the elderly and the middle-class. As a result, working Americans will pay more and get less."

"...as Americans, we meet our responsibilities. We take care of our families. We pay our bills. And we should demand the same thing from this Republican government. That is why I am asking my colleagues to oppose this rule and strongly oppose this bill. Because this budget sells out America."

The complete text of Rep. Slaughter's Floor statement as prepared is included below.

M. Speaker,

I have long said that budgets are moral documents. They reflect our choices, our priorities and they most clearly define our values, as a government and as a nation. Today's five-year budget reconciliation is no different. And that is exactly why Republicans in this House are worried. They are worried that the American people will see that they have sold out our American values.

So it should come as no surprise that it has taken weeks of intra-party fighting in the Republican Conference and one false start to get this bill to the floor. Why? Because they just can't muster the votes in their own Party to get this budget

passed.

One of my Republican colleagues captured it best in yesterday's CQ Daily when he said that, quote, "If the Republican Party cannot stand for responsible spending, then we stand for nothing at all." I would agree with him on that point. And as this Republican leadership continues to flail and flounder there can only be one conclusion drawn from this budget reconciliation: that this Majority has come to stand for nothing at all - except for making the rich richer while the rest of America pays the bills.

Because at its core that is what this budget does, and it is what this budget was intentionally designed to do... cut vital programs and increase the national debt in order to create tax cuts for the rich and the super rich.

I and many of my colleagues in this body, both Republican and Democrat, see nothing at all responsible about this agenda. And neither will the majority of the American people. This Republican budget reconciliation isn't worthy of the ideals of this nation. If it gets out of the House tonight, this Congress should be ashamed.

Republicans are calling this the Deficit Reduction Act, when soon this government will actually increase our already obscene deficit by another five billion dollars. Republicans will claim on the Floor today that they are reducing the deficit.

This is an outright deception. Where I grew up we had another name for it: it was called a lie. Don't be fooled by their Enron style accounting. The Majority deliberately chose to separate this bill from its planned passage of 56 billion dollars in tax cuts for the rich, more than half of which goes to the super rich - those with incomes over a million dollars per year. And without missing a beat, they are trying to finance their tax cut, as well as our skyrocketing debt, on the backs of the poor, the disabled, the elderly and the middle-class.

As a result, working Americans will pay more and get less. For instance, this budget will cut student aid programs by 14.3 billion dollars, which will make college more expensive for you and your children, and will ensure that literally millions of students will not have the means to achieve a higher education.

And until earlier this evening, the republicans were even planning to cut school lunch programs for poor children and food stamps for needy families. I would ask, whose values are those? They certainly aren't mine, and they certainly aren't the values of the hardworking families I represent. Which leads me to a very important point that I need to make here today:

Three months ago, a stunned nation watched as the national horror that was Hurricane Katrina unfolded on our television screens. No one could believe that this kind of widespread suffering could happen right here in America. It was a sobering moment for this nation. It was the moment that we understood: America had forgotten our moral responsibility to provide for the security and welfare of all our fellow Americans.

I would ask my friends in the Majority: in the wake of that realization, how can we cut the very programs that the victims of hurricane Katrina will depend on to rebuild their lives?

All so that the richest among us can be even richer? Unfortunately, this Majority sees fit to pull what little these victims have left, right out from under their feet. The result of this budget will be the denial of affordable medical service to those who have no where else to turn, and the creation of unprecedented healthcare premiums for those who can least afford them.

Child support services will be cut as well, making it harder for working parents to raise their children. I would ask my fellow citizens, have we learned nothing? Is this the America you believe in? Last year alone, the salary of major corporate CEO's increased by an average of 30%.

This year, oil companies are making the highest profits in their history. In fact, over the last four months alone, Exxon Mobil has earned just shy of 10 billion dollars in profits. And middle class Americans can no longer afford to fill up their cars with gas.

As the winter approaches, middle-class families in the Northeast are having to choose between paying their skyrocketing heating bills and buying food for their family. And it is only November.

All the while, this Majority is making it harder for your children to go to college and more expensive to get decent healthcare for your family. I can't think of anything less American than this. I can't think of anything more out of touch with the values of American families.

After all, no responsible parent in America would fail to provide their children food, clothes or an education... just so they could afford to buy a boat, or take a lavish trip. But that is the moral equivalent of what this Republican majority seeks to do here today. And it is a subversion of every value we hold dear.

Because as Americans, we meet our responsibilities. We take care of our families. We pay our bills. And we should demand the same thing from this Republican government. That is why I am asking my colleagues to oppose this rule and

strongly oppose this bill.

Because this budget sells out America. And I would ask, if we accept this: what will be next?

If we say it is acceptable to slash education, healthcare, trade protection, senior medical coverage, affordable housing, student loans, foster care, and family planning; if we agree to abandon all fiscal responsibility and further increase our record national debt, just so this Leadership can orchestrate one of the biggest tax giveaways to the rich in American history - then what will they try to do next? I don't think we can afford to find out.

My friends, I know that together, America can do better than this. We can do better than turning the American dream into a privilege for the few, instead of a right for all. We must do better, and we can start today by rejecting this bill. I reserve the balance of my time.