

Dec 14 2005 - Republican Leadership Shows True Colors on Ethics, Demonstrates Cowardice in the Face

Republican Leadership Shows True Colors on Ethics, Demonstrates Cowardice in the Face of Corruption

Republicans Have Broken Ethics Process Beyond Repair, Time for House to Start Again

Washington, DC - Today, Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Committee on Rules, released the following statement in response to Ethics Committee Chairman Doc Hastings' apparent stalling of the probe of indicted Representative Tom DeLay's multiple ethical scandals:

"Mr. Hastings, as Chairman of the Ethics Committee, made a promise to this House and to the American people that he would expose all sources of corruption and unethical conduct within this body. He has now broken that promise and is once again subverting the ethics and integrity of the House for the political gain of the Republican leadership.

Mr. Hastings and the Republican Leadership already threw the House Ethics process under the bus once. Now they are backing over it again to make extra sure it is dead. This is a true display of cowardice in the face of corruption.

By breaking his own word and refusing to move forward on an Ethics investigation into Mr. DeLay he clearly never intended to have, Rep. Hastings has exposed the true colors of this Republican Leadership.

It is clearly time for us to start over here in Congress, and take ethical matters into our own hands. We can no longer be victims of shady backroom politics. The faith the American people have in our system of government is at stake.

BACKGROUND:

GOP Ethics Committee Chairman Doc Hastings Stalling on DeLay Probe:

In April, House Ethics Committee Chairman Doc Hastings had pledged to launch an immediate probe of Tom DeLay if Democrats agreed to cooperate with him and allow him to organize the Standards of Official Conduct Committee, as it is officially known. Rep. Hastings has now changed his tune, delaying any possible DeLay probe by saying, "We're going to start all over." [Alexander Bolton, "DeLay probe put into limbo," The Hill, 12/14/05]

GOP Leadership Scheduling longer Recess to Buy DeLay Valuable Time:

Reports indicate that the GOP leadership is going to schedule the second House session of the 109th Congress to begin on Jan. 31 - that is, after a holiday break of more than a month, and two weeks after Senators are due to return to Washington. The late start will give indicted former Majority Leader Tom Delay valuable time during which his money laundering case in Texas can be resolved. As new leadership elections will not occur until the House is back in session, Republicans hope their maneuver will allow Mr. DeLay to reclaim his former position. [Ben Pershing, "House Plants to Sit Out January, Roll Call, 12/7/05, Rick Klein, "House Republicans quietly pushing for new leadership," the Boston Globe, 12/7/05]

The House has not had a functioning ethics committee since the Republican Majority initially attempted to eliminate the body's power at the beginning of the 109th Congress. After their changes to the Committee were reversed by a tide of public disapproval, Chairman Doc Hastings fired several members of the Committee's qualified investigative staff and tried to replace them with his own staffers, a deliberate attempt to politicize the body. The resulting impasse froze the Committee for several more months, until Republicans were shamed into retreat on their ethics assault and Democrats were able to forge an agreement with them intended to restart the Ethics Process in 2006. Rep. Hastings' recent decision puts this agreement in jeopardy.