

March 6 2006 - Rep. Slaughter Receives First Annual

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Binational Star Award at 2006 Tourism Summit

Award Recognizes Congresswoman's Leadership on Border Issues

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-Fairport), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, was today a recipient of the First Annual Binational Star Award. The honor was announced at the 2006 Binational Tourism Summit in Niagara Falls, New York. The Star Award is given to individuals who have taken a leadership position in the fight to promote binational cooperation, understanding, and economic and political partnerships between the United States and Canada.

"It's a true honor to be given this award by a group so dedicated to the pursuit of a secure and open border," Rep. Slaughter said. "It's been a pleasure to work with the Alliance, and I'm excited about what we are set to accomplish."

At the event, Rep. Slaughter's work with the Northern Border Caucus, as well as with national and local businesses, was highlighted. Particular focus was given to a current federal proposal requiring passports to cross the U.S.-Canadian border - the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI).

"Everyone at this summit knows that cross-border travel is critical to our communities, and that it keeps our local economies strong," Rep. Slaughter said. "We don't have to choose between economic and physical security. We can have both. We just have to approach this problem in the right way."

Also noted was Rep. Slaughter recent and novel use of a Presidential Executive Order to force a federally-led economic analysis of WHTI before the plan is enacted. Rep. Slaughter hopes that this comprehensive review will put added pressure on the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State to address the serious economic consequences WHTI will have if implemented in its current form, along with its potential to greatly damage tourism and trade in the region.

"With the help of organizations like this Alliance, we're going to fix what's wrong with WHTI, and protect what's right about our border and its communities: a respect for security, and a commitment to building even stronger economies," Rep. Slaughter said.

Del Rollo, President of the Binational Tourism Alliance, presented the award to Congresswoman Slaughter. Political and business leaders from both sides of the border were invited to the event, and joined the Summit delegates at the presentation ceremony.

The Binational Tourism Summit 2006 is a two day event, taking place at the Conference Center Niagara Falls in Niagara Falls, New York on March 6 and 7.

A chronology of Rep. Slaughter's actions on behalf of border communities can be found below:

April 7, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter writes to Departments of Homeland Security (DHS) and State against the WHTI proposal, and suggests that current programs like NEXUS and FAST need to be dramatically expanded.

April 14, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter meets with Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Assistant Secretary Elaine Dezenski and Department of State officials to register her concerns with the WHTI proposal.

April 15, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter requests a Government Accountability Office (GAO) study on the economic implications of a passport requirement, as well as alternative documents that will meet the requirements of Section 7209 of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA). The letter was co-signed by Rep. John McHugh and Rep. Loretta Sanchez.

April 18, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter writes to DHS asking that they create a NEXUS enrollment center and customer-service phone number for the Buffalo region.

May 2, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter reintroduces legislation that will create a position of Northern Border Coordinator at DHS. This position will allow the agency to better secure the northern border and effectively implement Section 7209 of IRTPA.

May 2, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter speaks to the Ontario/Niagara Falls Chamber of Commerce on her efforts to improve the WHTI, expand NEXUS, and increase border security.

May 12, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter meets with GAO to discuss her study request in more detail.

May 18, 2005: The House accepts Congresswoman Slaughter's amendment to the Homeland Security Authorization bill to expand the NEXUS program along the northern border.

June 7, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter and Canadian Member of Parliament Rob Nicholson send the U.S. and Canadian governments a letter requesting that they allow bicyclists with a NEXUS pass to cross the Whirlpool Bridge in Niagara County.

June 15, 2005: The GAO formally accepts Congresswoman Slaughter's request to study the economic implications of the WHTI.

June 29, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter meets with the Assistant Commissioner for Customs and Border Protection, to impress upon him the need to expand the NEXUS program.

July 9, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter cuts the ribbon on the new NEXUS lane at the Peace Bridge and holds a press conference on her amendment to the Homeland Security authorization bill to expand the program.

September 8, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter alerts local officials know about the advanced notice of proposed rulemaking on the WHTI and urges them to submit comments. Additionally, DHS asks Congresswoman Slaughter to have local leaders contact the agency directly about improving the NEXUS program.

September 21, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter hosts a Northern Border Caucus meeting with the State Department's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs, Frank Moss. The Caucus hears from Mr. Moss about the agency's proposal to create a North American travel card for land crossings.

September 28, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter hosts a strategy lunch with the Canadian Embassy and local border mayors from both countries. The Congresswoman later meets privately with the border mayors to discuss holding a public hearing on WHTI in Buffalo.

September 29, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter joins members of the Northern Border and Southern Border caucuses in sending a letter to DHS/State with their concerns on the WHTI proposal.

October 7, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter requests that DHS and State extend the public comment period on advanced notice of proposed rulemaking until a complete economic analysis has been conducted.

October 24, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter hosts DHS Assistant Secretary Elaine Dezenski and Members of Congress, local mayors and elected officials, tourism agencies, and economic development offices on a discussion of the WHTI proposal. The forum gives Western New York leaders an opportunity to speak directly with the policy maker responsible for implementing WHTI. The Congresswoman meets privately with Ms. Dezenski following the event.

October 26th, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter hosts a Northern Border Caucus meeting with a coalition of border Chambers of Commerce. The chambers make a presentation on the economic consequences of the WHTI and share with the caucus their ideas for improving the rule.

October 27th, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter is represented by her office at a briefing by Elaine Dezenski and Frank Moss.

October 28, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter's staff represents her at a panel discussion on WHTI at the Canadian Embassy. Panelists include officials from Homeland Security, the travel industry, and professional staff on the House Judiciary Committee.

November 1, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter's office meets with Frank Moss on State's proposed alternatives to a passport at a House Tourism Caucus event.

November 14, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter asks that the Congressional Research Service prepare a memorandum on the legal issues of allowing a drivers license to be an acceptable alternative under the WHTI. The memorandum is distributed to national associations as well as local officials, and is widely hailed as the first objective look at linking REAL ID with WHTI.

November 17, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter works with the House Small Business Committee to hold an oversight hearing on the WHTI proposal. She testifies to the negative effects such a requirement will have on border communities, and offers five solutions for improving the WHTI. Additionally, Congresswoman Slaughter submits testimony from the

Buffalo-Niagara Partnership and the Niagara USA Chamber into the hearing record.

November 18, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter meets with DHS officials responsible for the NEXUS program. DHS shares that they have agreed with the Canadian government to dramatically expand and streamline the NEXUS program by Fall 2006.

November 28, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter shares her Small Business hearing testimony with local leaders and provides an update on her meeting with DHS on the NEXUS program.

November 28, 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter's staff convenes a conference call with local Western New York border leaders to discuss a strategy for improving the WHTI and NEXUS.

December 2005: Congresswoman Slaughter and Congressman McHugh write to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee asking that they review the WHTI's potential impact on the ability of bridge commission's to improve their facilities.

December 8, 2005: The Canadian Ambassador, Frank McKenna takes Congresswoman Slaughter to lunch to thank her for her work on the WHTI, and to discuss a strategy for moving forward.

December 16, 2005: Rep. Slaughter offers an amendment to H.R. 4437, the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005, that would make any new documentation requirements free for children and widely-available at all ports of entry. Although this amendment is not accepted for debate by the Rules Committee, Rep. Slaughter is successful in getting an abridged version of her Northern Border Coordinator bill into the final legislation.

January 17, 2006: Rep. Slaughter responds to the State-DHS announcement on the "alternative travel card," by saying more information needs to be provided on the card and that it is very doubtful that the vision for this card addresses tourism and spontaneous travel.

January 20, 2006: Rep. Slaughter joins the co-chairs of the Northern Border Caucus in a letter to the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security inquiring about the alternative travel card announcement. Rep. Slaughter requests a meeting to learn more details about the card, and reiterates her concerns that the travel card will do little to mitigate disruption to spontaneous and tourism travel.

February 1, 2006: Rep. Slaughter meets with the President/CEO of the Travel Industry Association of Canada (TIAC) to discuss WHTI. TIAC thanks Rep. Slaughter for taking the lead in opposition to WHTI.

February 2, 2006: Rep. Slaughter leads a bipartisan letter to the Department of Homeland Security with 21 of her colleagues, asking for clarification on U.S. VISIT Director Jim William's recent comments about a one-day pass for WHTI. The letter asks that DHS explain if they are, in fact, creating a one-day pass, and if so, how will a pass work at the borders.

February 3, 2006: Rep. Slaughter discovers a little-known Presidential Executive Order (EO 12866) that mandates an

agency conduct a cost-benefit analysis for any proposed rule that will impact the economy by more than \$100 million per year. Accordingly, Rep. Slaughter writes to the U.S. Office of Management and Budget asking that they declare WHTI a significant regulatory action that requires a cost-benefit analysis.

February 13, 2006: Rep. Slaughter's staff makes a WHTI presentation to the BESTT coalition, an international coalition of businesses and trade associations from across the United States and Canada who share a common concern about the ramifications of the WHTI.

The BESTT Coalition unanimously endorses Rep. Slaughter's Executive Order/cost-benefit argument, and proceeds to ask over 100 Members to support this argument.

March 2006: The Michigan Congressional delegation endorses Rep. Slaughter's call for a cost-benefit analysis of WHTI, and sends a letter to OMB requesting that one be provided.

March 6, 2006: The Binational Tourism Alliance presents Rep. Slaughter with their annual, "Binational Star Award," to honor her for all of her work on border issues and WHTI.