

## March 9, 2006 - Slaughter, Democrats Continue Push for Ethics Reform in Congress

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Advocate for Quick Passage of Honest Leadership and Open Government Act

Washington, DC - Leading Democrats have continued to advocate for sweeping Congressional reforms to the way business is done in Washington. Today, the House Rules Committee conducted its second open hearing on the subject of Congressional ethics.

Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Ranking Member on the Committee, has used the hearings to ask her Republican colleagues to pass the Democratic Reforms already introduced in H.R. 4682, the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act. The Act is still the only comprehensive ethics reform bill that has been filed for consideration.

"More than two centuries ago, one of our nation's greatest statesmen - Thomas Jefferson - laid out Rules for this body that promoted a political process defined not by corruption, but by reason and the pursuit of the public good," Rep. Slaughter said at today's meeting. "We now know that our Congress has deviated from this wise path, and that we need to find our way back."

"Influential lobbyists, along with their receptive Congressional clients, have shut millions of Americans out of a political process that they were meant to control," Rep. Slaughter continued. "Sadly, I feel that they have undermined democracy itself here in Congress."

"The results have been dire," Rep. Slaughter said. "We have seen a long series of bills that have not had the public interest in mind. They have benefited well-connected corporations and special interests, but not the men, women, and children who count on this Congress to address their needs."

Rep. Slaughter also spoke of the Democratic plan for reform:

What we need are common-sense rules and standards, vigilantly enforced, that will prevent such influence-peddling from continuing.

What we need is to find a balance between these two extremes: a set of rules that will allow Members to be actively engaged with the world...

...and yet not permit them to be drawn away from it, and their responsibilities, by unethical influence-seekers.

I would like to remind my friends in the Majority that I and my fellow Democrats have a plan on the table, the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act, which will address many of these concerns. We hope to work with our colleagues to refine and pass these Democratic reforms.

Mr. Chairman, nothing is more important than ensuring the integrity of our political process.

As I said last week, it is the very foundation from which every law, every act, and every proclamation springs. If the process is broken, then our legislation will be also - and people will suffer as a result.

This body should be moved by the strength of our ideas, not just by the strength of our numbers - or by the size of the bank accounts wielded by special interests.