

March 13, 2006 - New Study Reveals U.S. to Lose \$785 Million, Canada \$1.7 Billion Annually with WHTI

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Slaughter Repeats Call for Cost-Benefit Analysis of Passport Initiative

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, today repeated her call for a cost-benefit analysis of the Department of Homeland Security's Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) following the release of a new study from the BESTT Coalition (Borders for Economic Security, Trade and Tourism). The study concluded that the United States stands to lose \$785 million annually if the WHTI is implemented in its current form.

"This new study is only more evidence that the Travel Initiative is deeply flawed and needs to be changed," Rep. Slaughter said. "If we don't conduct a comprehensive economic analysis of this plan before ground is broken, we will simply be writing off the economic security of millions of Americans and Canadians. And they deserve better."

Rep. Slaughter was today joined by 20 New York Members of Congress in requesting that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) oversee the proposed analysis. She had previously employed an Executive Order in a further attempt to force the federal government to study the economic impact of its plan.

The Conference Board of Canada confirmed BESTT's findings. It concluded that the WHTI would result in 3.5 million fewer nationwide crossings from Canada to the United States, and more than twice this number from the U.S. to Canada. In addition to the \$785 million annually lost by America, the Canadian economy would stand to lose \$1.7 billion per year in revenue.

The BESTT study used a Zogby International poll taken of individuals living in cities along the border. The poll found that

such citizens would be less likely to visit the United States if they were required to use a passport or another secure document at the border, a requirement of the WHTI. The study also revealed that:

- Vacation is the top reason why Americans and Canadians travel to Canada and the United States, respectively. Many poll respondents also said that they would not participate in a program requiring a new identification card for cross-border travel.
- Most Canadian visitors to the United States travel more than 100 miles to get there. They are also two times as likely as American tourists to spend over \$500 during their visit. Consequently, their trips contribute significantly not just to border economies, but to a broader array of communities in both countries.
- A majority of the poll's respondents said that they supported an enhanced driver's license that could combine a normal license with a border crossing ID card, and that such a document would increase the likelihood that they would continue to cross the border.
- Most poll respondents also said that they did not believe that new border-crossing restrictions were necessary.