

## April 6, 2006 - Rules Republicans Message to America: Reform? We Don't Need No Stinking Reform!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, April 6, 2006

Rules Republicans Message to America:  
Reform? We Don't Need No Stinking Reform!

Rules Republicans Oppose Jeffersonian Tradition, Embrace Subsidized Corporate Jet Travel, Prevent Ethics Committee Accountability, Prevent Members from Reading Legislation, Vote for Continued Conference Scope Violations and more...

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, made the following statement in reaction to the Republican leadership directing Rules Republicans to vote down every single Democratic reform amendment offered in last night's Rules Committee Mark-up. A detailed summary of the amendments follows.

"This Majority demonstrated last night with their votes that they are against serious ethical reform for this Congress, that they will continue to violate the traditions laid down by Thomas Jefferson that have guided this body for 200 years, and that they have no real interest in reforming this Congress.

"Republicans have, once again, proven with their votes that they have neither the ability, nor the credibility to lead us out of this ethics crisis, which they have created."

"They will only support a weak, toothless reform bill designed to provide political cover, not the real reform Americans expect,"

"Tom DeLay may finally be gone, but his spirit is alive and well in this corrupted Republican Congress."

Rules Republicans Voted Down Every Single Democratic Reform Amendment

Rules Original Jurisdiction Markup on H.R. 4975

Democratic Reform Amendments Offered and Rejected

Amendment 1 - list of scope violations/motion to strike items violating scope- Rep. Slaughter

The amendment adds a new section to the bill that would require an itemized list of any scope violations in a conference report be included in the rule providing for its consideration and that any violation of this provision would trigger a point of order against consideration of the rule, guaranteeing a vote. The new section would also provide a motion to strike items that are beyond the scope of a conference.

This past December when the Department of Defense FY06 Appropriations conference report was supposedly finalized at 6:00 pm in the evening of December 18th and signature sheets were circulated to the conferees. Then around 11:00 pm that night a new 40-page provision was added to the conference report by Senator Frist and Speaker Hastert without the consent of or a vote by the rest of the conferees. That provision, which was not in either the House or Senate versions of the bill, gave broad immunity to pharmaceutical companies that make flu vaccines. Another egregious scope violation was in the 2005 omnibus conference report, a new provision that gave Appropriations members and staff access to the IRS records of private citizens was added at the last minute and discovered only after the House passed the conference report. Members need to know when provisions are slipped into a conference report that were not first approved by the House or Senate.

Rejected 4-9 party-line vote

Amendment 2 - roll call vote for final version of any conference- Rep. Matsui

The amendment adds a new section to the bill that would require a roll-call vote, in an open meeting, on the final version of a conference report.

Because virtually every rule for a conference report that is reported from Rules in the past two Congress waives all points of order, it is impossible to raise a point of order against a conference report that contains a scope violation or language that may have been added to the conference report after an agreement was reached by the conferees. By requiring a roll-call vote in an open and public meeting, conferees will be required to meet to approve the final version of the conference report before it is filed in each body. No new provisions could be added secretly. Any changes and/or additions would be clear violations of the intention of the conferees.

The Department of Defense FY06 Appropriations conference report is a particularly egregious example of where language was added to the conference report after it had been approved. This way an actual vote by the conferees would be required before the conference report could be brought to the Rules Committee or the Floor. Rejected 4-7 party-line vote

#### Amendment 3 - 24 hour layover for rules- Rep. Matsui

The amendment adds a new section to the bill that would use actual time (24-hours as opposed to one legislative day) to determine how soon a rule can be called up on the House Floor after it is reported from the Rules Committee.

On numerous occasions in this Congress, the Rules Committee has met late at night or early in the morning on one legislative day and brought a rule to the Floor within hours of reporting. Members have very little time to read the rule or the underlying bill before voting. Members should have at least 24 hours from the time the Rule is reported to review the rule and the bill. Many times the Rule makes in order completely new text or amendments that only a few Members have seen. It does a disservice to the institution to ram rules and bills through the House in this manner. Rejected 4-8 party-line vote

#### Amendment 4 - electronic votes lasting more than 30 minutes- Rep. Slaughter

The amendment adds a new section to the bill that would require, whenever a recorded vote is held open for more than 30 minutes, that the Congressional Record include a log of the voting activity that occurs after that 30-minute time frame to show which Members voted after that time and which Members changed their votes during that period.

The log would show which Members voted after that time and which Members changed their votes during that period. While this would not block the vote from going past 30 minutes, it would provide an official record of any voting activity which occurs after the initial 30-minute period.

Rejected 4-9 party-line vote

Amendment 5 - consideration point of order when waiving 3-day layover against conferences- Rep. McGovern

The amendment adds a new section to the bill that would provide that whenever the 3-day layover is waived against a conference report, it is in order for a Member to raise a point of order, with a guaranteed vote, to determine whether the House will consider the conference report.

Members should have a minimum of three days to read a conference report that is only one or two votes away from becoming law. If it is brought to the Floor before that period of time, at least Members would be given a separate debate and vote on whether to proceed to consideration of the conference report less than 72-hours after it was filed. Rejected 4-9 party-line vote

#### Amendment 6 - integrity of the conference process point of order- Rep. Slaughter

The amendment adds a new section to the bill that would create a new Majority/Minority leader point of order that can be raised against consideration of a conference report where the integrity of the conference is in question.

The violations would include, but not be limited to, serious scope violations; changes to the conference report after the conferees had reached a final agreement (including additions or deletions); and instances where the minority was not allowed to fully participate in the conference committee process. The point of order to consider the conference report would be available to the Majority or Minority Leader if that individual, in good faith, has substantial reason to believe that the events surrounding the conference committee meeting and/or conference report were in serious violation of House rules. Raising the point of order would provide for an automatic 20-minutes of debate followed by a vote. Whatever the outcome, Members will have an opportunity to make their position known on the conference breach in question. By limiting the point of order to the two leaders, this process would be available to block a conference report from consideration only when there is strong evidence that a serious breach of House rules and/or decorum has occurred.

Rejected 4-9 party-line vote

#### Amendment 7 - restrictions and reporting requirements for private jet use- Rep. McGovern

The amendment adds a new section to the bill that would regulate Member travel on private jets by requiring Members to pay full charter costs when using corporate jets for official travel and to disclose relevant information in the Congressional Record, including the owner or lessee of the aircraft and the other passengers on the flight. Rejected 4-9 party-line vote

Amendment 8 - comprehensive earmark disclosure- Rep. Hastings (FL)

The amendment replaces section 501 of the bill with a new provision that would mandate public disclosure of which Members sponsor earmarks and disclosure of whether Members have a financial interest in the earmark. Unlike the language currently in the bill, which applies only appropriations measures, this amendment would define earmarks to include those contained in authorizations, appropriations, and tax provisions. Rejected by voice vote

Amendment 9-new process for pre-approval of privately funded travel- Hastings (FL)

The amendment strikes the provision in the bill that calls for a total travel ban and replaces it with new language that establishes pre-approval and disclosure system through the Standards Committee for privately-funded travel. Rejected 3-8 party-line vote

Amendment 10-clarification on ticket prices- Rep. McGovern

The amendment modifies section 304 to clarify that the "face value" of a ticket for the purposes of section 304 means the cost of that ticket if a member of the general public were purchasing it.

Since the adoption of the \$50 gift rule limit, some stadium owners have given the lessors of sky boxes some tickets that had a face value of \$0.00 printed on them. Clearly these tickets had a value that most likely exceeded the \$50 limit yet because of a technicality were allowed under the gift rule. Unfortunately the currently language in sec. 304 would allow such a fictional value that is printed on a ticket would be the value of the ticket for gift rule purposes. This amendment would have prevented that.

Rejected 4-9 party-line vote

Amendment 11-restrictions on dismissal of Ethics Committee staff- Rep. Slaughter

The amendment adds a new section to the bill to provide that staff on the Committee of Standards of Official Conduct can be dismissed only by an affirmative vote of the Standards Committee.

When the Ethics Task Force met in 1997 and reported its recommendations to the full House, it was the intention that staff for this committee should be non-partisan professionals who could do their jobs without threat of political retaliation. Investigating Members of the House is a thankless, but necessary job. If the staff is in fear of retaliation by Committee Members, they cannot possibly do their jobs in an effective and thorough manner. The rules require that the Ethics Committee staff must be hired in a bipartisan manner, they should also be dismissed in a bipartisan manner.

Rejected 4-9 party-line vote

Rules Committee original jurisdiction markup - All amendments to H.R. 4975

The Committee adopted two Republican amendments by voice vote and rejected all 11 Democratic amendments, the bill was order reported by voice vote:

Capito Amendment:

Amended the section that required mandatory ethics training for all staff to include language withholding the pay of any employee who does not complete training within 30-days. A 2nd degree amendment by Rep. McGovern to strike the portion of the amendment denying staff pay was defeated by voice vote. The Capito amendment was Adopted by voice vote

Gingrey Amendment:

Amended the portion of the bill that required identification of earmarks in appropriations bills. The earmarks would be expanded to include funding for a produce or service that can only be obtained from a specific company in a particular district or area. Adopted by voice vote

Slaughter-Amendment 1 - .463 (two part amendment)

Require an itemized list of any scope violations in the rule providing for consideration of a conference report (items that were not in either the House or Senate passed versions of the bill) and provides for a consideration point of order guaranteeing a vote when this rule is violated and provide a motion to strike items that are beyond the scope of a conference. Rejected 4-9 party-line vote

Matsui-Amendment 2 - .464

Require a roll-call vote, in an open meeting, on the final version of a conference report. Rejected 4-7 party-line vote

Matsui-Amendment 3 - .465

Use actual time (24-hours as opposed to one legislative day) to determine how soon a rule can be called up on the House Floor after it is reported from the Rules Committee. Rejected 4-8 party-line vote

Slaughter-Amendment 4 - .466

Require, whenever a recorded vote is held open for more than 30 minutes, that the Congressional Record include a log of the voting activity that occurs after that 30-minute time frame to show which Members voted after that time and which Members changed their votes during that period. Rejected 4-9 party-line vote

McGovern-Amendment 5 - .467

Whenever 3-day layover is waived against a conference report, it is in order for a Member to raise a point of order guaranteeing a vote to determine whether the House will consider the conference report. Rejected 4-9 party-line vote

Slaughter-Amendment 6 - .468

Create a new Majority/Minority leader point of order with a guaranteed vote that can be raised against consideration of a conference report where the integrity of the conference is in question. Rejected 4-9 party-line vote

McGovern-Amendment 7 - . 469

Regulates Member travel on private jets by requiring Members to pay full charter costs when using corporate jets for official travel and to disclose relevant information in the Congressional Record, including the owner or lessee of the aircraft and the other passengers on the flight. Rejected 4-9 party-line vote

Hastings (FL)-Amendment 8 - .470 (strike section 501 and insert new language)

Mandates public disclosure of which Members sponsor earmarks and disclosure of whether Members have a financial interest in the earmark. Earmarks include authorizations, appropriations, and tax provisions. Rejected voice vote

Hastings (FL)-Amendment 9 - .056

Establishes pre-approval and disclosure system through the Standards Committee for privately-funded travel. Rejected 3-9 party-line vote

McGovern-Amendment 10-.473

Clarifies that the "face value" of a ticket for the purposes of section 304 means the cost of that ticket if a member of the general public were purchasing it. Rejected 4-9 party-line vote

Slaughter-Amendment 11-.474

To provide that staff on the Committee of Standards of Official Conduct can be dismissed only by an affirmative vote of the Standards Committee. Rejected 4-9 party-line vote