

Issues - Education

Education

Rep. Slaughter believes that it is essential to ensure equal access to quality education for all Americans. She advocates high goals, tough standards, and sufficient safety measures for schools, teachers and students. She also wants to provide students with a safe place, with productive activities, to go after the school day ends. In addition, Rep. Slaughter wants to see schools gain the technological resources necessary to move students forward successfully into the information age.

She is also committed to making higher education affordable for all families and individuals through tax credits for college expenses, tax deductions on interest on student loans, and tax-free college tuition "IRA" accounts. She is working to help economically disadvantaged youth and adults, as well as disabled individuals, overcome challenges and receive the excellent educational opportunities to which they are entitled. Working together, the nation, states and localities will enable schools, teachers, and parents to guide the next generation of students successfully through the 21st Century.

Preparing Students for the Next Century

Rep. Slaughter believes that American students are capable of mastering a challenging curriculum. She has supported efforts to update the technology available to students through the e-rate program, which is providing discounted services to schools and libraries so that they can gain access to the Internet. She supports the School-to-Work program, which exposes students to a variety of jobs and careers to inspire their own educational pursuits. Rep. Slaughter continues to work to ensure that effective, efficient federal initiatives coordinate with state and local efforts to benefit all of her constituents in Rochester and the surrounding suburbs benefit from these federal programs.

No Child Left Behind

Rep. Slaughter initially voted

for the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 because it had the promise of committing federal dollars to ensuring meaningful reform in our nation's schools. However, the Bush Administration has failed to call for the funding required by that law, and it fails to implement reforms in coordination with what was approved by Congress. Since the passage of No Child Left Behind, education has been given approximately \$67 billion dollars less in federal funding than what was promised.

Maintaining a Safe Educational Environment

Unfortunately, too many of our nation's schools are no longer safe havens for our young people. From Arkansas to Pennsylvania to Rochester, New York we hear too many stories of guns in schools, drug use among young people, and increasing gang membership. Rep. Slaughter supports efforts to improve the safety of schools during the school day and also after the school day ends. She champions the federal Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Program to enhance local efforts to prevent crime, as well as alcohol and drug abuse. This program helps communities put trained officers in and near schools; helps schools install metal detectors; and supports conflict resolution training as well as drug awareness and counseling.

In the 110th Congress, Rep. Slaughter has cosponsored H.R. 3132, the Safe Schools Improvement Act, which would require states to use grants to collect and report information regarding bullying and harassment while providing sub-grants to local educational agencies and schools to respond to them. She is also a cosponsor of H.R. 3438, the Bullying and Gang Reduction for Improved Education Act, which would expand the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities program to include bullying and gang prevention, while promoting healthy lifestyles and mentoring programs.

Providing After School Programs for Students Across the Nation

Rep. Slaughter authored the America After School Act, a bill to increase the availability and affordability of quality care for 5-to-15-year-olds both before and after school, as well as during summers and weekends. The bill would give students a safe environment in which to do homework, receive tutoring in basic skills, participate in college preparation activities and investigate technology. Rep. Slaughter continues to help bring about a substantial funding increase for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Initiative. This program funds after school projects that utilize local public schools and their existing resources, such as computers, libraries, and gymnasiums.

Working to make Higher Education Affordable for Every American

Rep. Slaughter recognizes that college costs have increased exponentially and that her constituents need tax relief over five years to help their children take advantage of our nation's higher educational system.

Rep. Slaughter has supported \$40 billion in tax relief for families incurring higher education costs, including the Hope Scholarship Credit and the Lifetime Learning Credit. The Hope Scholarship credit is a tax credit for the first two years of higher education. It is equal to 100 percent of the first \$1,000 of eligible expenses, and 50 percent of the next \$1,000. The Lifetime Learning Credit is for subsequent years and is equal to 20 percent of the eligible expenses not to exceed \$5,000; \$10,000 after 2002. When fully phased in, 12.9 million students are expected to benefit each year -- including 916,000 in New York State.

Last year, with the Congresswoman's support, Congress passed and the President signed The College Cost Reduction and Access Act which set in motion a plan to cut interest rates on federal Stafford Loans in half by 2011. As of July 1, 2008, the interest rate on subsidized Federal Stafford Loans dropped to 6.0 percent. The rate will continue to drop until it reaches 3.4 percent in 2011. An average New York student starting at a four-year degree program this fall will save \$2,660 over the life of their loan.

The College Cost Reduction and Access Act also increases the maximum Pell Grant award by \$490 for the upcoming school year, encourages talented students to become teachers by offering \$4,000 in up-front tuition assistance to those who commit to teaching in high-need subjects or in high-need public schools, and provides loan forgiveness to individuals who work for ten years in fields that serve the public, including military service members, first responder, firefighters, nurses, public defenders, early childhood educators, and others.

The College Opportunity and Affordability Act, which passed with Rep. Slaughter's support earlier this year, helps make college education more accessible by ensuring certain student protections against lenders and addressing tuition increases. Among other things, the bill holds colleges and universities accountable for tuition hikes, requires lenders to abide by a strict code of conduct and provide students with information about borrowing and repayment options, streamlines the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) process, and makes textbook costs more manageable.

In May, the President signed the Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act, which increases federal unsubsidized loan limits to decrease reliance on private lenders, and gives parents and students more time to pay off federal PLUS loans. It goes on to temporarily classify, as an extenuating circumstance, delinquencies of up to 180 days on home mortgages and medical debt, thereby making it possible for parents feeling strained by the current housing market and rising medical costs to secure loans for their children.

Furthermore, Rep. Slaughter helped create an education "Individual Retirement Account" to allow annual contributions of \$500 for each child under the age of 18 to help pay for college expenses. She supported a tax deduction of up to \$1000 for interest paid on student loans. She also voted for the extension of the employer education assistance exclusion for undergraduate level courses and cosponsored a bill which would have permanently extended this exclusion and included graduate level courses.

Improving Educational Opportunities for All Americans

Rep. Slaughter is committed to level the playing field to ensure equal opportunities for all students. For example when she first arrived in Congress, she recognized that the educational rights of homeless children were threatened by residence regulations and economic disadvantages. She authored and passed legislation to keep homeless children in school and help remove the obstacles they face.

She has been highly active in efforts to preserve funding for the Head Start and Title I programs so that all students get the help they need to succeed. These federal initiatives help our nation's most at-risk students learn crucial intellectual and emotional development skills from preschool through secondary school. She also supports programs that promote the empowerment and independence of Americans with disabilities by helping states invest in services for their disabled students ranging from teacher training to advanced technology.

She supported a successful federal initiative to hire 100,000 new teachers in local school districts. This program, which targets schools most in need, is part of a plan to lower class size in the early grades to an average of 18 pupils per teacher.

Additionally, Rep. Slaughter secured a \$20,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts for the Big Read program. Administered through Writers and Books, Inc, the grant will enable the Big Read to engage the entire community – young and old – in reading and discussing certain

books.

Finally, Rep. Slaughter has worked on an annual basis to ensure federal funding for the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) in Rochester. She is proud that NTID has achieved tremendous success in preparing deaf people to enter society and the workplace and to compete on par with their hearing peers.

Education, Athletics and Title IX

Rep. Slaughter has been leading the charge to uphold the federal government's commitment to Title IX, the women's educational fairness and equity law. Enacted in 1972, Title IX of the Education Amendments requires federally funded schools to provide comparable educational and athletic opportunities for both females and males. However, while female participation in sports has greatly increased, women still remain underrepresented in elementary, high school and college athletics with regard to the availability of opportunities, resources and scholarship funding.

In order to help remedy these disparities, Rep. Slaughter introduced H.R. 901, the "High School Athletics Accountability Act," along with 23 bipartisan cosponsors. This bill will help high schools improve opportunities for girls in sports, and thereby encourage the participation of both girls and boys in athletics. The High School Athletics Accountability Act requires that high schools report basic data on the number of female and male students in their athletic programs and the expenditures made for their sports teams. Currently high schools are not required to disclose any data on equity in sports, making it difficult for high schools and parents to ensure fairness in their athletics programs. Better information can help high schools and parents of schoolchildren foster fairness in athletic opportunities for girls and boys.

In addition to addressing women and girls in sports, Rep. Slaughter has worked to draw attention to the importance of encouraging girls in non-traditional fields such as science, math, engineering and technology; training for displaced homemakers and single parents; improving girls' self-esteem; and supporting basic education for girls in developing countries around the world.

