

## January 3, 2007 - Slaughter Unveils New Democratic Rules Package

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Slaughter Unveils New Democratic Rules Package  
Democrats Deliver on Promised Ethics Reform

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), incoming Chairwoman of the House Rules Committee, today announced details of the new Democratic Rules package to be introduced and voted on once Congress convenes this week.

"Today, the Democratic Caucus is voting on a Rules Package that will usher in a new day for this Congress," Rep. Slaughter said. "In recent years, a broken Rules process has served as the gateway to corruption that has cost real American dearly. Democrats are determined to stamp that corruption out - and the proof is in this Rules package."

"Democrats are committed to treating the Minority better than we were treated, and to restoring civility to the way business is conducted in the House."

"The reforms we announce today will restore integrity, openness, and honesty to Congress, and will hand the keys of government back to the American people. Serving in House is a privilege. It's time Members of Congress starting acting that way."

Further information on the Rules package is available at [housedemocrats.gov](http://housedemocrats.gov) and is included after Rep. Slaughter's remarks.

Rep. Slaughter's remarks, as prepared, are included below:

Good afternoon, I'm Rep. Louise M. Slaughter, incoming Chairwoman of the House Rules Committee.

Nearly one year ago, I was joined by Speaker-Elect Pelosi and Senators Reid and Obama to unveil the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act. It was a new covenant Democrats were signing with the American people.

And today, the Democratic Caucus is voting on a Rules Package that will usher in a new day for this Congress.

In recent years, a broken Rules process has served as the gateway to corruption that has cost real American dearly. Democrats are determined to stamp that corruption out - and the proof is in this Rules package.

Democrats are committed to treating the Minority better than we were treated, and to restoring civility to the way business is conducted in the House.

We are also determined to stop special-interest lobbyists from writing the legislation this body passes. That means ending the influence and access lobbyists buy with trips and gifts.

And so, our package prohibits House Members and employees from accepting gifts and travel from lobbyists and the organizations that employ them.

It prohibits Members from traveling on private corporate jets. And it requires all travel to be pre-approved by the Ethics Committee.

Along with lobbyist influence, earmarking has spiraled out of control in recent years, and has fueled many of the major corruption scandals plaguing this body.

Well, those days are over. We won't have any more members writing earmarks that benefit them personally. And we won't tolerate any more bridges to nowhere. Our Rules Package requires full disclosure of earmarks in all bills and conference reports before Members are asked to vote on them.

Finally, when Republicans took over in 1994, they made it a stated goal to turn K-Street into a Republican corridor of money and influence. But starting tomorrow, the K-Street project will be out of business.

Our package will prohibit Members from influencing the hiring decisions of K-Street firms. Members of Congress have more important things to do than spend their time running around downtown interviewing potential lobbyists.

The reforms we announce today will restore integrity, openness, and honesty to Congress, and will hand the keys of government back to the American people. Serving in House is a privilege. It's time Members of Congress starting acting that way.

Thank you.

**BACKGROUND ON HOUSE DEMOCRATS DELIVERING ON PROPOSED ETHICS/RULES REFORMS TO RESOLVE THE BROKEN HOUSE ETHICS PROCESS**

have pledged to pass key measures affecting the everyday lives of all Americans. One of these is a series of proposals to clean up Washington and severing unethical ties between lawmakers and lobbyists. We will start by banning gifts and travel from lobbyists, and ending the abuses connected to privately-funded congressional travel (including corporate jets). Democrats are committed to restoring democracy in the House - by simply following the existing rules of the House. In the rules package, Democrats would address the most egregious abuses in the House -- curbing abuses on voting, and opening up Conference Committees so that the minority is able to participate.

## ETHICS PROVISIONS

- Bans Gifts from Lobbyists: Bans gifts and meals from lobbyists and the organizations that employ them, and requires that tickets to sporting and other events given to Members and staff are valued at market price.

- Bans Lobbyist Travel: Bans lobbyists and the organizations that employ them from planning, organizing, requesting, financing, arranging, or participating in travel for Members or staff, except for one-day travel to visit a site, attend a forum, participate in a panel, or give a speech. The ethics committee would be required to develop guidelines for minimal lobbyist involvement for one-day/one-night travel. Travel provided by a private university would not be affected by anything in the rules package.

- Prohibits use of Corporate Jets Prohibits the use of official, personal or campaign funds to pay for the use of non-commercial, corporate jets. This provision does not apply to charter plane services.

- Ends the K Street Project: Clarifies that no Member can take or withhold an official act, or influence, or offer or threaten to influence, the official act of another with the intent to influence on the basis of partisan political affiliation an employment decision or employment practice of any private entity

- Mandates Ethics Training: Require mandatory ethics training annually for all House employees.

- Requires Certification and Pre-Approval for Travel Paid for By Outside Groups: Requires the sponsors of all other permitted travel to certify that they have abided by all restrictions on lobbyist involvement. Requires Members and staff to obtain pre-approval from the ethics committee for travel to ensure trips are connected to official duties, the amount spent is limited to reasonable expenses, and the destination is related to the purpose of the trip. Requires the full disclosure of all travel within 15 days after the trip. Travel provisions take effect beginning on March 1st.

- Transparency for Earmarks: Requires the full disclosure of earmarks in all bills and conference reports before Members are asked to vote on them, and provides a more comprehensive definition of earmarks that will require the disclosure of hundreds of special spending provisions that would have remained hidden under the Republican proposal.

## CIVILITY PROVISIONS

- Curbing Abuses of Voting Time: Prohibits the Speaker from holding votes open for the sole purpose of affecting the outcome.

- Reforms Conference Committees: Reforms the conference committee process by requiring adequate notice of meetings to ensure Member attendance, ensuring information is available to all conferees, and ensuring that the text of conference reports cannot be changed after signatures.

## UNDER REPUBLICAN CONTROL

Exactly two years ago, Republican House leaders took the unprecedented step of using the opening day rules package to launch a partisan attack on the Ethics rules.

In reaction to a unanimous, bipartisan decision of the Ethics Committee late in the 108th Congress to admonish Majority Leader Tom DeLay for his unethical behavior, House Republican leaders gutted the ethics rules on the first day of the 109th Congress. They adopted a change to the so-called "45 day" rule that allowed Members from one party on the evenly split Ethics Committee to effectively kill any ethics investigation.

Earlier drafts of their ethics rules changes had even proposed eliminating the requirement that "A Member...shall conduct himself at all times in a manner that shall reflect creditably on the House."

A few weeks later, the Republican leadership purged the Ethics Committee of all its Republican Members and staff who took their duty to enforce the Ethics rules seriously.

A few weeks earlier, Republicans had even changed their Conference rules to allow a member of their leadership to retain his or her post, even if he or she was under criminal indictment.

#### HOUSE REPUBLICANS ATTACKED DELAY'S ACCUSER FOR FILING COMPLAINT CHARGING ETHICS ABUSES:

- Attacked former Congressman Chris Bell for filing an ethics complaint against DeLay, the first in seven years: Republicans attacked former Congressman Chris Bell for filing an ethics complaint against DeLay, the first ethics complaint filed in seven years. DeLay went so far as to call Bell a "partisan stalker." His lawyer, former Republican Rep. Ed Bethune, accused Bell of libel and tried to initiate contempt of Congress hearings against him. Rep. LaHood (R-IL) immediately proposed legislation that would have blocked legitimately elected, standing members such as Bell from even filing complaints. Rep. Doolittle (R-CA) went as far as threatening that the Republicans "are going to have to respond in kind" comparing it to a matter of "you kill my dog, I'll kill your cat." This retaliatory campaign on the part of Republicans was designed to damage the credibility of the ethics process and further discourage Members from filing complaints with the Ethics Committee. ["DeLay to Be Subject of Ethics Complaint; Democrat's Wide-Ranging Charges Break Unwritten Truce Between Parties," The Washington Post, 6/15/04; "Shooting the Messenger," Houston Chronicle, 11/22/04; "LaHood Blasts Ethics Charges Like Bell's," Roll Call, 6/17/04; "Ethics Panel May Face Busy Lame-Duck Session," Roll Call, 10/12/04]

#### HOUSE REPUBLICANS KEPT CHANGING ETHICS RULES TO PROTECT TOM DELAY:

- Changed House ethics rules to let a complaint die in the Ethics committee: Changed House ethics rules to let a complaint die if the ethics committee cannot decide whether it should be investigated within 45 days. ["Warning: Ethics-Free Zone," The Washington Post Editorial, 3/14/05]

- Changed House ethics rules to allow a Republican veto of ethics' investigations: Changed House ethics rules to allow a party to block an ethics investigation by voting along party lines, thus denying a majority vote to allow it to proceed. ["After Retreat, G.O.P. Changes House Ethics Rule," The New York Times, 1/5/05]

- Facing intense public scrutiny and pressure from Congressional Democrats Republicans reversed their own rules changes designed to protect DeLay: House Republicans did an about face by reversing their changes in the aforementioned ethics rules in April of 2005, after facing an intense pressure from House Democrats led by Leader Nancy Pelosi, Rep. Alan B. Mollohan (D-WV), the ranking member of the House Ethics Committee, and Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY), the ranking members of the House Rules Committee.

## HOUSE REPUBLICANS CHANGED INTERNAL PARTY RULES TO PROTECT TOM DELAY:

- Changed an 11-year-old conference rule that required party leaders to step down from their leadership post if they were indicted by a state grand jury : On Nov. 17, 2004, the House Republican Conference voted to change an 11-year-old party rule that required party leaders to step down from their leadership post if they were indicted by a grand jury. Their action came shortly after Texas district attorney Ronnie Earle indicted three of DeLay's associates on charges of violating state campaign laws, The conference reversed itself on Jan. 3 and reinstated the rule. [Richard Simon, " GOP Backs Off on Ethics Changes", Los Angeles Times, 1/4/2005]

## HOUSE REPUBLICANS PURGED THE HOUSE ETHICS COMMITTEE TO PROTECT DELAY:

- Removed Chairman of the House Ethics Committee who oversaw three admonishments of Tom DeLay: Speaker Dennis Hastert removed Rep. Joel Hefley (R-CO) as chairman of the Ethics Committee that oversaw three admonishments of DeLay in 2004. Prior to his removal, Hefley said of Republican colleagues he would not name: "They said I was hurting my career here. The implication is that some form of retribution would be taken." Hefley also told a newspaper after the third DeLay admonishment: "I've been attacked; I've been threatened." [ "Ethics Panel's Chair Is the Toughest Seat in the House," The Washington Post, 1/7/05; "Hefley: 'I was threatened'," The Hill, 10/13/04]

- Replaced two members of the Ethics Committee who both admonished DeLay and voted against the Republican Conference rule changes to protect DeLay: Replaced the two members of the Ethics Committee, Rep. Kenny Hulshof (R-MO) and Rep. Steve LaTourette (R-OH), who both admonished DeLay and voted against the Republican Conference rule changes to protect DeLay, with two Republican loyalists, Rep. Lamar Smith (R-TX) and Tom Cole (R-OK), who both contributed to DeLay's legal defense fund. "Ethics Purge," The Washington Post, February 5, 2005]

- Fired several longtime committee staffers: Rep. Doc Hastings (R-WA), who replaced Hefley as Ethics Committee chairman, fired several longtime non-partisan committee staffers, including John Vargo, the staff director and chief counsel, and Paul Lewis, a counsel. Both Vargo and Lewis had been working on the committee since before Hefley was its chairman. [ "Critics Slam Hastings' Dismissal of Ethics Staff," Roll Call, February 17, 2005]

REPUBLICANS STALLED ANY INVESTIGATIONS OF DELAY AND OTHER SCANDALS ENGULFING DOZENS OF HOUSE REPUBLICAN LAWMAKERS:

- GOP Ethics Committee Chairman Doc Hastings Stalling on DeLay Probe: In April, House Ethics Committee Chairman Doc Hastings had pledged to launch an immediate probe of Tom DeLay if Democrats agreed to cooperate with him and allow him to organize the Standards of Official Conduct Committee, as it is officially known. Rep. Hastings has now changed his tune, delaying any possible DeLay probe by saying, "We're going to start all over." [Alexander Bolton, "DeLay probe put into limbo," The Hill, 12/14/05]

- GOP Leadership Scheduling longer Recess to Buy DeLay Valuable Time: The GOP leadership scheduled the second House session of the 109th Congress to begin on Jan. 31, 2006 - that is, after a holiday break of more than a month, and two weeks after Senators are due to return to Washington. The late start will give indicted former Majority Leader Tom DeLay valuable time during which his money laundering case in Texas can be resolved. As new leadership elections will not occur until the House is back in session, Republicans had hoped their maneuver would allow Mr. DeLay to reclaim his former position. [Ben Pershing, "House Plants to Sit Out January, Roll Call, 12/7/05, Rick Klein, "House Republicans quietly pushing for new leadership," the Boston Globe, 12/7/05]

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