

issues - womens issues

Women's Issues

Representative Louise Slaughter is an outspoken national champion of women's rights. As the former Co-chair of the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues ("Women's Caucus") during the 108th Congress, Rep. Slaughter spearheaded bills in Congress to address the sexual assault of women in the military and the promotion of equal opportunity under Title IX.

Congresswoman Slaughter constantly fights for the equality and rights of women, calling for awareness and action both in the U.S. and abroad.

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.

Violence Against Women

Domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking are significant problems affecting women and girls throughout our country. In the United States alone, approximately two million women are physically or sexually assaulted or stalked by an intimate partner every year. One out of every six women has experienced an attempted or completed rape at some point in her lifetime, and one in four women in the US will experience domestic violence in her lifetime. Around the world, at least one in every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused during her lifetime. And, young women 16 to 24 years old are now experiencing the highest rates of intimate partner violence.

Studies demonstrate that up to one half of these women will lose their jobs in the aftermath of the crime. Victims of gender-based violence experience higher rates of depression, anxiety disorders, and mental illnesses, addiction, eating disorders, suicide and self-esteem problems than non-victims. Total costs to our economy of rape and sexual assault are estimated to be \$127 billion a year in the United States, including loss of productivity, medical and mental health care, police and fire services, social/victim services, and quality of life issues.

For nearly 15 years, the Violence Against Women's Act (VAWA) has saved lives and helped millions of victims find safety, security and self-sufficiency. Since VAWA's enactment in 1994, cases of domestic violence have fallen and over one million women have used the justice system to obtain protective orders against their batterers.

Congress has a responsibility to ensure that rape prevention programs are fully funded, that law enforcement has resources, that battered women shelters are open, and that victim advocates have the training to stop violence against women.

Rep. Slaughter was an original co-author of the first VAWA in 1994, and she has been a cosponsor of subsequent VAWA

reauthorization bills, including VAWA III which was incorporated into the Department of Justice Appropriations Authorization Act (H.R. 3402) and became law on January 5, 2006. H.R. 3402 includes \$75 million to combat domestic violence, distributed at \$15 million per year through 2010.

Rep. Slaughter's stand-alone bill, the Badge and Uniform Security and Trustworthiness Act, was incorporated into this important piece of legislation. This provision makes it more difficult for rapists and other attackers to pose as police officers and public officials in order to target women.

Women in the Workplace, Business, and the Economy

Throughout her twenty years in Congress, Rep. Slaughter has been a tireless advocate on issues of concern to women in the workplace and women small business owners. She highlighted the law that Congress passed in 1996 setting a goal of 5 percent for women and minority-owned businesses in all government contracts. While few agencies meet or exceed the contracting goals, the Department of Defense (DoD) has been one of the worst offenders. In May of 2003, Rep. Slaughter met with the DoD Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization to discuss the \$200 billion contract awarded to Lockheed Martin to build the Joint Strike Fighter. Of that \$200 billion dollar contract, only \$1.1 million in contracts had gone to women small business owners. At the meeting, women Members helped DoD develop a strategy for reaching out to and contracting with women-owned businesses (either through primes or subcontracts), and encouraging Lockheed Martin to subcontract out to women-owned businesses on the Joint Strike Fighter to meet or exceed the 5 percent goal. Congresswoman Slaughter participated in a follow-up meeting in July 2004 to discuss the progress that DoD was making to ensure equity in contracting opportunities. Subsequent to that meeting, she requested that representatives from Lockheed Martin and Pratt and Whitney discuss their plans to meet the congressionally mandated 5 percent contracting goal.

Rep. Slaughter continues to highlight issues affecting working women, such as the need for improved child care, preschool and after school care for children, diversity in the workforce, career training for displaced homemakers and single parents, the glass ceiling and the gender gap in wages, employment issues faced by women with disabilities, balancing work and family, supporting Women's Business Centers, and addressing gender disparities in the fields of math, science, engineering and technology.

Women in the Military

Within the past few years, Rep. Slaughter made significant progress in drawing national attention to the problem of sexual assault of women in the military. In March, 2004, the Congresswoman led a hearing on this issue and presented a report containing the transcript of the hearing to U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Following the hearing, in May 2004, the U.S. House unanimously passed an amendment championed by Rep. Slaughter requiring the Pentagon to develop a comprehensive and uniform policy to prevent and respond to sexual assault of women in the military. Since enactment of this policy, Rep. Slaughter has hosted annual briefings whereby DoD has presented its report findings and progress on this issue to Congress.

In May 2005, Rep. Slaughter introduced an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2006 National Defense Authorization bill (H.R. 1815) to ensure that the DoD provides better care to military victims of sexual assault. Specifically, this language requires the Secretary of Defense to assess the availability and accessibility within assigned or deployed units of trained personnel, rape evidence kits, testing supplies for pregnancies and STIs, as well as other critical resources. It also requires the Secretary of Defense to develop a plan to enhance accessibility of supplies, trained personnel, and transportation resources in response to sexual assaults occurring in deployed units. The language was part of an en bloc amendment offered by Chairman Hunter, which was approved by voice vote.

A couple years ago, Rep. Slaughter introduced an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2007 National Defense Authorization bill (H.R. 5122) requiring DoD to include the results of disciplinary action, including Article 15s and court-martial convictions, as part of the annual report on sexual assault in the military. The amendment was once again part of an en bloc amendment offered by Chairman Hunter and approved by voice vote.

In January, Rep. Slaughter led a bipartisan effort calling on the US State Department and the Department of Defense to establish protocols for protecting the rights of women sexually assaulted by US contractors overseas.

She secured language in the FY09 DoD Authorization bill to create a database on sexual assaults in the military, including conviction rates. This language was included in the House-passed bill. She also worked with Republican Congressman Ted Poe on an amendment to the FY09 DoD Authorization bill to provide additional requirements and responsibilities relating to alleged crimes by or against contractor personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan. Specifically the language requires that any time a contractor in Iraq or Afghanistan receives a report that a crime prosecutable under the Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act or the Uniform Code of Military Justice, the contractor must report it to the appropriate U.S. authorities. This could include the Department of Defense (DoD) or Department of State investigative services. Second, it requires that the contractor have in place resources for crime victims' assistance, so that women and other crime victims have a place to go for help. This language also was included in the House-passed bill.

Recently, on July 31, 2008, Rep. Slaughter testified before the Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs about the problem of sexual assault in the military.

In addition, Rep. Slaughter has reintroduced comprehensive legislation entitled the Military Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Act to address multifaceted aspects of both sexual assault and domestic violence within the military in order to ensure that women, and men, are not subject to violence and assault by their fellow members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Women's History and Heritage

Rep. Slaughter has reintroduced the National Women's Rights History Project Act (H.R. 3114) to provide Americans with the opportunity to learn more about the female heroes who have fought tirelessly to secure these rights. Specifically, H.R. 3114 would establish an auto route linking sites significant to the struggle for women's suffrage and civil rights. It also would expand the current National Register travel itinerary website, "Places Where Women Made History," to include additional historic sites. Finally, this bill would require the Department of Interior to establish a partnership-based network to offer financial and technical assistance for interpretive and educational program development of national women's rights history.

This bill is based on Rep. Slaughter's years of dedication to ensuring that due recognition is given to the women's movement in the United States.

During the 150th anniversary of the first Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls in 1998, Rep. Slaughter organized a delegation of current and former women Members of Congress to participate in these and related events in Rochester, NY. She served as an active facilitator and advisor in planning the Seneca Falls 150th anniversary events, and joined then-First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton on the stage to speak during the celebration's inaugural ceremonies.

In the 106th Congress, Rep. Slaughter secured funding for the National Park Service to study the establishment of a women's rights history project, with a significant portion of the project located in the Western New York area. The project would link a variety of sites important to women's history, such as the Women's Rights National Historical Park, the Susan B. Anthony House, and the Harriet Tubman House. In July 2000, Rep. Slaughter was honored to be elected Chair of the Women's Progress Commemoration Commission (WPCC), a body created by legislation she had previously authored and successfully passed through Congress in 1998. In 2001, during the events commemorating the 153rd anniversary of the First Women's Rights Convention, Rep. Slaughter was proud to release the final report and recommendations of the WPCC at the Women's Rights National Historic Park in Seneca Falls, NY. This report outlined seven important steps that can be taken to preserve sites important to women's history. To review a copy of the report, please visit: <http://www.nps.gov/wori/historysites.htm>.

Rep. Slaughter has been involved in a number of other efforts on women's history. She spoke at the unveiling of the portrait of former Congresswoman Mary Norton (1875-1959) in its new location in Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi's office in celebration of Women's History Month in March 2004.

Rep. Slaughter also actively promoted moving the historic Women's Suffrage Statue of Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton from the Capitol's basement into the Rotunda and delivered a speech at the celebration marking the placement of the monument in the Rotunda.

International Women's Issues

Rep. Slaughter has worked hard to draw attention to and eliminate violations of basic human rights of women and children throughout the globe. While in Congress, Rep. Slaughter has worked on many issues affecting international women's human rights, such as female genital mutilation, child marriage, trafficking in women and girls, women and HIV/AIDS, maternal mortality, women and hunger, basic education for girls, and violence against women.

In June 2005, Rep. Slaughter called upon Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to convey the US's serious concern over the Pakistani government's treatment and detention of Mukhtaran Bibi. In 2002, a village council of elders sentenced Mukhtaran Bibi to be gang-raped for the alleged misconduct of her brother. She was then forced to walk home naked in front of a crowd of onlookers. Instead of committing suicide out of shame, which is often the result of rapes in Pakistan, Mukhtaran Bibi became an outspoken advocate for women's rights and challenged the status quo of women in Pakistan by seeking justice. She testified against her perpetrators in court, and six men were convicted. Since those convictions, Ms. Bibi has used her compensation money to start two elementary schools, to purchase a women's shelter, to convert a van into a local ambulance, and continues to speak out against honor killings and rapes of women. Despite great pressure upon her to remain silent, she has traveled abroad to publicize the plight of women in similar situations. As a result of the outspokenness of Rep. Slaughter and others, the government of Pakistan ultimately permitted Mukhtaran Bibi to travel to the US.

In the 108th Congress, Rep. Slaughter led the effort to increase funding levels in the Foreign Operations Appropriations bill for the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM add link to <http://www.unifem.org/>). UNIFEM supports innovative programs promoting women's basic human rights and status throughout more than 100 countries. The agency works in partnership with UN organizations, governments and NGOs to reduce women's poverty, end violence against women, halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS, and support women's roles in conflict prevention and reconstruction efforts. UNIFEM projects promote peace and stability on the ground in many areas of strategic interest to the U.S., such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Columbia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the former Soviet Union. Helping to pave the way from conflict to constitution in Iraq, the organization has supported organizations advocating for women's political rights and participation. UNIFEM has also been working to stem the tide of violence against women throughout the world by administering the Trust Fund to Support Actions to Eliminate Violence Against Women.

Women's Health

For more information on Rep. Slaughter's efforts to promote women's health, please click [here](#).

Women's Caucus

For more information about the Women's Caucus, please click [here](#).

For information on the achievements of the Women's Caucus under Rep. Slaughter's leadership as Co-chair, please visit [Women's Caucus 108th Congress Report \(pdf\)](#)