

## June 8, 2007 - Slaughter Announces Inclusion of WHTI Language in Homeland Security Appropriations

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Chairwoman of the House Rules Committee, today announced that language she authored focused on reforming the ground travel requirements of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) will be included in the 2008 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill to be considered by the House next week.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Slaughter Announces Inclusion of WHTI Language in Next Week's Homeland Security Appropriations Bill

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Chairwoman of the House Rules Committee, today announced that language she authored focused on reforming the ground travel requirements of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) will be included in the 2008 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill to be considered by the House next week.

Rep. Slaughter's legislation withholds \$100 million from the funds required by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to implement WHTI until the Department has determined if driver's licenses can be enhanced to meet the Initiative's requirements.

The language also requires DHS to fully test its proposed passport card before making it publicly available, as well as to develop a plan for land implementation that will be shared with the public. Finally, Rep. Slaughter's legislation requires that DHS submit a report to Congress on the success of the driver's license pilot program, and reveal its overall WHTI roadmap before being allowed to put the proposed WHTI documentary requirements into place.

"I worked with Rep. David Price, the Chairman of the Homeland Security Committee, to have this language inserted in the upcoming DHS appropriations bill," Rep. Slaughter said. "We have to force DHS to take the time to implement WHTI in a rational manner that does not disrupt legitimate cross-border travel. This is a major step forward in that fight."

"Last night's announcement that the Bush administration is suspending WHTI requirements for air travel should act as a wake-up call for both DHS and the State Department," Rep. Slaughter continued. "Homeland Security has, unfortunately, continued to insist that passports will be required for land travel starting in January, even while acknowledging privately that various pilot programs will not be completed in time and that a lower-cost passport card will be unavailable until the spring of 2008 at the earliest."

"This flawed approach to boarder security is already having a very real effect, deterring cross-border travel and hurting our economy. As with air travel, DHS must take a step back and reevaluate all aspects of its WHTI implementation plan."

"My language will help prevent the chaos that we've already seen caused by WHTI. By fixing this initiative, we will keep our economy growing and our land borders open to the travel and trade that is a necessity and a right for border residents."

## Background

In February, Rep. Slaughter introduced comprehensive legislation to fix and reform WHTI. The Protecting American Commerce and Travel Act, or PACT Act, has been endorsed by over 100 groups in the greater Niagara region, as well as the US Chamber of Commerce and the Travel Industry Association of American.

The PACT Act requires DHS to develop low-cost alternatives to a passport and test the concept of an enhanced driver's licenses prior to the implementation of WHTI. Rep. Slaughter believes that travelers should not have to purchase new documents if a common driver's license can suffice instead.

Rep. Slaughter worked closely with House Homeland Security Chairman, David Price, to include key provisions of her PACT ACT in the upcoming Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act for 2008. The House is expected to take-up the spending bill on Tuesday.

Specifically, the language authored by Rep. Slaughter makes it known that Congress does not believe DHS is implementing WHTI in a coherent fashion, or one that is transparent to the traveling public.

DHS requested \$252 million in FY08 and FY09 for implementation of WHTI. Rep. Slaughter's language stipulates that DHS cannot have access to \$100 million of that total until it transmits a report to Congress containing: "[t]he results of pilot programs used to develop and implement the plan required by Section 7209 of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (bill that mandated WHTI)..."

Furthermore, the report must include:

- (1) infrastructure and staffing required, with associated costs by port of entry;
- (2) updated milestones for plan implementation;
- (3) detailed explanation of how such section (7209) have been satisfied;
- (4) confirmation that a vicinity read radio frequency technology identification card has been adequately tested to ensure operational success;
- (5) a description of steps taken to ensure the integrity of privacy safeguard.

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