

June 25, 2008 - Rep. Slaughter Lauds House Passage of Bill to Protect Americans with Disabilities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congresswoman Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Chairwoman of the House Committee on Rules, today joined colleagues in passing H.R. 3195, the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, legislation that rejects U.S. Supreme Court decision that have reduced protections for people with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act, restoring original Congressional intent.

“The Americans with Disabilities Act has transformed our nation since its enactment, allowing millions of Americans with disabilities to succeed in the workplace,” said Rep. Slaughter. “Unfortunately, over the years, the protections provided by this landmark civil rights law have been eroded, leaving millions of Americans with disabilities vulnerable to employment discrimination.”

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) was intended to provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities. Just as other civil rights laws prohibit employers from basing decisions on characteristics like race or sex, Congress wanted the ADA to stop employers from making decisions based on disability.

Unfortunately, since 1999, several U.S. Supreme Court decisions have narrowed the definition of disability so much that

people with serious conditions such as epilepsy, muscular dystrophy, cancer, diabetes, and cerebral palsy have been determined to not have impairments that meet the definition of disability under the ADA.

“Discrimination of any form is simply unacceptable,” Slaughter concluded. “With the passage of this critical legislation, Congress has definitively declared that any American who faces discrimination on the basis of a disability is protected by federal law.”

BACKGROUND

H.R. 3195, the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, will do the following:

Specifically reject erroneous Supreme Court decisions that have reduced protections for people with disabilities under the ADA, restoring original Congressional intent.

Make it clear that the ADA is intended to provide broad coverage to protect anyone who faces discrimination on the basis of disability.

Clarify the definition of disability.

Prohibit the consideration of mitigating measures such as medication, prosthetics, and assistive technology, in determining whether an individual has a disability.

Provide coverage to people who experience discrimination based on a perception of impairment regardless of whether the individual experiences disability.

H.R. 3195 is supported by a broad coalition of civil rights groups, disability advocates, and employer trade organizations.

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