



**Representative Louise M. Slaughter**  
**Chairwoman, House Committee on Rules**  
**Representing New York's 28<sup>th</sup> District**

# **PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Rep. Slaughter and 33 Representatives Call on DHS to Retract Agency's Misguided Border Policies**

Washington, DC – Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Chairwoman of the House Rules Committee, along with over 30 Members of the bipartisan Northern Border Caucus, today sent a letter to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff calling on the Department to halt its plan to institute new requirements for border crossing documentation at land and sea ports of entry beginning January 31, 2008.

The letter expresses contempt for DHS' actions in not only violating the intent of the United States Congress, but threatening the nation's economic security by implementing a new, resource intensive system without ensuring a smooth transition. The letter calls on the Secretary to continue accepting oral declarations and government issued photo identification cards as proof of citizenship until full implementation of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative in June 2009.

**“As a northern border community, we truly understand the unique relationship we have with Canada – and see ourselves as one community with a river running through it,”** said Rep. Slaughter. **“Because of this relationship, it is vital that all we keep our borders open for the trade and travel.”**

**“I am especially concerned by the new requirements that travelers, including children, will need a proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate. It is absolutely absurd to ask our teenagers traveling for school or sporting trips to Canada to hold-on to their birth certificates so they can enter back into the US. What happens if they lose those documents and are detained at the border?”**

**“We must work on a smart and secure border, because it is not only important to those who live near the northern border, but to the working families across the country who are being affected right now by our nation's fragile economy,”** concluded Slaughter.

**“The DHS proposal will do more harm than good,”** said Representative Bart Stupak. **“The agency has not met its obligation to inform travelers about the new requirements which will lead to confusion, increased delays and disrupted commerce. This is an ill-advised policy that will significantly limit trade and tourism.”**

**“Ending the practice of allowing oral declarations at the Northern border and imposing onerous requirements in its place just doesn’t make sense,”** Rep. Earl Pomeroy said. **“We will keep pushing the administration to take enough time to get this right and make sure that we secure our border in a way that does not economically disadvantage U.S.-Canada border communities.”**

## **BACKGROUND:**

Last November, the Government Accountability Office reported that Customs and Border Protection is understaffed and is simply unable to review and verify the influx of required documents without significantly increasing wait times and crippling legitimate trade and travel.