



Hon. Doris O. Matsui

Member of Congress

Doris O. Matsui

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GOP LEADERSHIP RESORTS TO ARM TWISTING FOR ENERGY BILL TAKE TWO

Washington, DC – Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) gave the following statement questioning the shortsightedness of the Republican Leadership's attempt to force through Congress the second energy bill in seven weeks. On yet another piece of legislation, Republican leadership was forced to extend the vote and do some arm-twisting to secure a slim margin to pass the legislation.

“Because Hurricane Katrina highlighted the failure of the Republican leadership's first attempt to create an energy policy for this nation, we have a rare opportunity. We have a ‘do-over,’ a chance to craft a forward-looking, strategic plan to increase our energy security and reduce our dependence on foreign gas and oil. Yet, sadly, we are debating legislation that merely purports to address our nation's energy supply and consumption. Instead of tackling America's very serious energy challenges, we are looking at the cast-asides from the earlier legislation.

“Hurricanes Katrina and Rita demonstrated to the American people how fragile our energy supply is and how disruptions to the supply chain can lead to rapid increases in gas prices. Every American now clearly sees that our energy policy affects everything from a family's monthly budget to our national security. We should be putting forth thoughtful solutions that will provide short-term relief to working Americans as well as long-term energy security for the future. Unfortunately, H.R. 3893 fails to do either and I therefore urge my colleagues to support the substitute.

“In the immediate term, any energy legislation this House passes must effectively help consumers with energy prices. My constituents – like yours – are paying over \$3 a gallon at the pump. And for many of them, this is quickly eating away at their family budgets. Sadly, I don't think it is that far in the future when this will begin to erode consumer confidence and drag down the economy.

“Yet, H.R. 3893 does not include price-gouging provisions that will sufficiently protect American consumers, particularly when you have oil companies making as much as \$80 million a day.

“We all recognize that we owe our constituents more than just empty promises to address high gas prices. And we can do that with the substitute. It gives the FTC real authority to investigate all the companies in the energy supply chain and provides for significant fines that actually have the power to deter companies from gouging consumers.

(Continued...)



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“And the shortcomings of H.R. 3893 are not exclusive to its attempts to provide immediate relief – the legislation also fails to adequately address our nation’s long-term needs. Supporters of H.R. 3893 claim that the incentives included in this legislation for oil refiners will persuade them to construct new facilities, thereby increasing the nation’s capacity to process crude oil and softening the effects of future supply disruptions. Unfortunately, this is quite clearly a false claim. Refiners have minimized capacity to maximize profit and this bill is not likely to change that economic calculation.

“Again, Congress has an alternative. If we want to increase this nation’s domestic refining capacity, we should pass the substitute, which provides for a Strategic Refinery Reserve – a logical compliment to the existing Strategic Petroleum Reserve. This will allow us to respond to future energy disruptions with increased flexibility and control.

“But this legislation fails to do that, and worse still, it takes no notice of the larger causes of our energy insecurity. U.S. demand for fossil fuels continues to grow at an alarming rate. A forward-looking energy policy should curb our reliance on unstable foreign oil markets and accelerate research for alternative sources of energy.

“This bill takes only nominal steps toward that goal: There is a laughable \$2.5 million for an education program and encouragement to federal agencies to buy energy efficient light bulbs. This is not exactly the bold out-of-the-box thinking that will free the next generation from dependence on foreign sources of energy. Congress needs to step back and look at our energy stance in a long-term, strategic manner. We owe that to our children and our grandchildren.

“H.R. 3893 is long on token provisions but short on substantive policy solutions. We can do much better. I urge my colleagues to vote no on the rule and reject this myopic, opportunistic legislation.

“I yield back the balance of my time.”

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