



Hon. Doris O. Matsui

Member of Congress

Doris O. Matsui

www.house.gov/matsui/

Serving California's 5th District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Sunday, December 18, 2005

CONTACT: Adriana Surfas
(202) 225-7163

Republican Leadership Brings Unprecedented Martial-Law Rule to Floor

Allows ANY legislation to be brought to the floor, without providing time for Member review

Washington, DC – Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) – the Rules Committee member managing the resolution allowing for debate of the martial-law rule – condemned the unprecedented move by the Republican Leadership of bringing a martial-law rule, which will allow almost any piece of legislation to be brought to the floor. This is the first time in the history of the U.S. House of Representatives that a martial-law rule has not specified at least a type of legislation, like appropriations bills.

“This martial-law rule is unprecedented for the power it grants the Majority to bring any piece of legislation to the floor. It will tarnish the honor of this institution by restricting the democratic process,” said Congresswoman Matsui.

The following is the statement Congresswoman Matsui delivered on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives.

“Mr. Speaker, today we consider H.Res. 632 – a martial-law rule allowing the House to bring bills to the floor on the same day that the Rules Committee meets to report that bill.

“But significantly, the martial law rule *does not specify* which bills may be brought up. Instead, it is a blank check for the Majority party to bring up *virtually any* bill in Congress up until the Speaker gavels this legislative day to a close.

“Mr. Speaker, this is a highly unusual procedure. I would like to take a moment to explain to the American people exactly *how* out of the ordinary it is.

“This is the first time that a totally open-ended, blanket martial law rule has been brought to the House floor. Every other rare use of this procedure has specified at least a category of legislation. This rule is unprecedented for the power it grants the Majority.

“Mr. Speaker, some Members may argue that the blanket nature of this rule allows them to conduct business efficiently, by allowing them to bring up the first thing that is ready to pass.

“I, however, take a different view: This will tarnish the honor of this institution by restricting the democratic process. It will allow bills to come up with absolutely no prior notice to Members. Members may not have time to examine what is in the bill. They may not have even heard of the bill before.

(Continued...)



Hon. Doris O. Matsui

Member of Congress

Doris O. Matsui

www.house.gov/matsui/

Serving California's 5th District

“There is a risk that last-minute language could be written incorrectly or that it could have unintended consequences. There is the risk that controversial provisions could be inserted without proper review.

“And by not giving Members this review time, we will be forced to simply hope that this didn’t occur. Mr. Speaker, I believe that Members need more of a guarantee than that before we cast our votes.

“Mr. Speaker, such a harsh rule impedes the democratic process. It did not have to be that way. The House Leadership chose not to conduct floor business on Friday of last week or on Monday of this week. This type of schedule has been commonplace all year long.

“So I must conclude that we are here not out of necessity, but because the Republican Leadership is unable to govern. Once again, it seems as though the Majority cannot be trusted with conducting the business of the American people in an open manner.

“I urge my colleagues to reject this blanket martial law rule. Members should have adequate time to review bills before they vote for them.”

###