



Hon. Doris O. Matsui

Member of Congress

Doris O. Matsui

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Congresswoman Matsui Calls for Clean Vote on Increasing the Minimum Wage

Washington, DC – Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) spoke on the floor of the House of Representatives in support of a clean up or down vote on increasing the federal minimum wage. The Republican leadership allowed the floor vote on the long-sought legislation to provide election year cover to their members and only after including a poison pill – a provision to roll-back the Estate Tax.

“The only reason we have not had a vote on increasing the minimum wage is because of the Republican leadership. They have resisted the will of the American people and a bipartisan coalition of Members,” stated Congresswoman Matsui. **“Raising the minimum wage is a real, tangible policy decision to significantly help 7½ million Americans who this Congress has virtually ignored.”**

The federal minimum wage has stagnated at \$5.15 per hour since 1997 and Democrats in the House and the Senate have been fighting to increase it to \$7.25 per hour. Congresswoman Matsui supports the bipartisan minimum wage increase legislation introduced by Congressman George Miller (H. R. 2429). This legislation would raise the minimum wage to \$7.25 within two years, but the bill does not contain the poison pills which the Republican Leadership added to today’s legislation. Currently a worker earning the minimum wage earns about \$10,700 per year.

Below is the text of her remarks:

“Mr. Speaker, before we begin this debate, I urge each Member to ask themselves: Why did you first seek to election to this House?

“It is my hope that it is similar to my reason – to represent my hometown, to craft laws and policies that will serve the best interests of the families and businesses of that community, and to ensure that the world we leave behind is better than the world you and I inherited.

“Of late, I think congress has forgotten that.

“When I compare the laundry list of items important to my constituents and the American people to what Congress is doing – a disconnect is apparent.

“An overwhelming majority of Americans think it is long-past time to increase the minimum wage. Over the past six years, this Congress has done little, if anything, to help those earning the minimum wage and the families who depend on them.

(Continued...)

“The buying power of the minimum wage is now at its lowest point in 57 years. At the same time, the cost of key necessities like health care, education, and gas have been rising faster than inflation.

“Yet during the past 8 years, Members of Congress have raised their own pay seven times – by nearly \$30,000. In those same years minimum wage workers have not gotten a single raise—they continue to earn an average of \$10,700 a year.

“Raising the minimum wage is a real, tangible policy decision to significantly help 7½ million Americans who this Congress has virtually ignored.

“We can make this choice, but only by allowing an up or down vote on Congressman Miller’s bipartisan bill. This bill will gradually raise the minimum wage from \$5.15 an hour to \$7.25. Since February, nearly 200 Members have signed a petition that would force an up or down vote on this measure and that is what we should have today.

“The only reason we have not had a vote on it is because of the Republican leadership. They have resisted the will of the American people and a bipartisan coalition of Members.

“And now that the minimum wage increase will finally be debated by the House, it has once again been loaded down with poison pills. If the Republican leadership really cared about raising the minimum wage, they wouldn’t have waited until the 11th hour before the House leaves for recess. This is a transparent election year ploy. I am confident the American people will see it for what it is.

“When a party holds 3 votes to rollback the estate tax, but refuses to allow a clean vote on the minimum wage, it is clear where its priorities are.

“While raising the minimum wage will help millions of Americans, this estate tax measure will primarily benefit just 7,500 families.

“Looking at the majority’s record, we should not be surprised.

“There’s the series of tax cuts that benefit the wealthiest among us, the massively flawed Medicare prescription drug benefit, and subsidies for oil and gas companies

“But for those in the middle class and working families, there isn’t much to talk about.

“Nothing to help them get access to decent health care or build on the promise of stem cell research. Or lower the price of gas. Or make college more affordable. And at the end of today, the majority certainly can’t claim to have made a good faith effort to raise the minimum wage.

“And that is truly a shame. Because you have squandered an opportunity to help the constituents that need your help the most.”

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