



Hon. Doris O. Matsui

Member of Congress

Doris O. Matsui

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Port Security Legislation Represents Good Start, But Also Lost Chance

Washington, DC – Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) issued the following statement on the Security and Accountability for Every Port Act or the SAFE Port Act (H.R. 4954), which the House passed early Saturday morning. Even though this legislation makes critical improvements to our nation's ports, it also represents a missed opportunity to implement the rail and mass transit security recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. The legislation does include increases in the authorization levels for port security grants, provides funding for 1,000 more port officers, and authorizes the hiring of 100 more auditors to examine the security plans private businesses submit as part of the Customs Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT) program.

“When it comes to national security, close enough isn't good enough. This conference report goes a long way to secure ports and the international supply chain. We know that 100% cargo screening is technologically possible, yet the Republican Leadership has decided that it's best to aim low,” stated Congresswoman Matsui.

During the House and Senate negotiations of their respective versions of the legislation, the rail and mass transit security provisions were removed from the final conference agreement. This was despite the House's bipartisan vote to advise the conference negotiators to accept the Senate provisions. These provisions would have authorized \$3.5 billion for mass transit security grant programs and \$1.2 billion for freight and passenger rail security. As the 9/11 Commission noted in their report, our rail and mass transit systems are particularly vulnerable and yet, 5 years after 9/11 Congress has not enacted initiatives to address this serious security threat.

In commenting on the removal of the mass transit and rail security provisions, Congresswoman Matsui stated, “This is a major missed opportunity to finally take firm steps to secure our rail and mass transit systems. While the Senate took these important first steps, those critical provisions were unfortunately stripped from the final agreement.”

Since 2003, the federal government has invested only around \$400 million in transit and rail security. The majority of this funding was directed towards public transit systems rather than Amtrak or freight rail security. By comparison, the federal government has spent over \$20 billion since 2003 on aviation security.

Concluded the Congresswoman, “Every day rail cars pass through my district en route to the Roseville rail yard and it is not uncommon for the cargo to contain hazardous materials – everything from hairspray to chlorine. An incident on one of these trains could have a severe impact on our region – the people and the economy. Clearly, rail security is a key component of our homeland security needs, but it requires the leadership of the federal government. We need to set standards.”

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