
Matsui Issues Statement During Debate on Transportation Security Legislation

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Tuesday, March 27, 2007

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Washington, DC - Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui issued the following statement in support of the Rail and Public Transportation Security Act of 2007, which passed the House of Representatives on March 27th by a vote of 299 to 124:

I strongly support the Rail and Public Transportation Security Act of 2007. Our country needs this bill. Our communities need this bill.

This legislation is very timely for my district. On March 15th a train trestle burned down just outside central Sacramento. The fire sent a dark plume of smoke into the sky.

The residents of our region received quite a scare. Children were kept inside because authorities could not determine if the smoke from the trestle fire was toxic.

Fortunately, no one was hurt. The incident is not being investigated as a terrorist attack.

However, this fire showcased the impact that our rail vulnerabilities can have on communities.

In Sacramento, our train tracks form a ring around our most populated areas. If the trestle had caught fire just a few miles down the track, houses would have burned. If the train had exploded, or if it had leaked hazardous material, my constituents could have died.

I cannot let that happen.

That is why this legislation is so important. It makes critical advancements in rail security policy.

I am grateful that Representative Markey has addressed the transport of hazardous materials through heavily populated areas. As the situation in Sacramento demonstrated, we must begin to re-route hazardous shipments to avoid populated areas. When possible, we must integrate new technologies to secure these shipments. I look forward to working with Mr. Markey to implement this proposal.

It is also important to note that more people than ever are using public transit. Over 10 billion trips were taken on public transportation last year. There has been a 30% increase in public transit use in the last decade.

This increased ridership is great news. However, it is important that we invest in security funding to match growing demand. This legislation will do just that.

Finally, I want to commend Chairman Bennie Thompson of the Homeland Security Committee for his leadership on this issue.

As a member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I have seen how smoothly Chairman Oberstar and Chairman Thompson have collaborated. They have done a great job dealing with the jurisdictional issues raised by transit security.

Their work demonstrates the level of commitment that is needed to secure our communities. Such collaboration is a refreshing change. It should serve as an example for us all as we tackle other pressing issues facing the 110th Congress.

I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

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