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Washington, DC — Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) introduced the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) Improvement Act of 2007 to address the arbitrary decisions made by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in connection with this grant. This legislation is based upon preliminary findings of a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, that Congresswoman Matsui led a coalition of her colleagues to request. Ultimately, this legislation will bring much-needed consistency to the UASI grant program and allow the first responders in our communities to better protect our citizens.

“I’m pleased that this year DHS revised its list of cities eligible for the UASI grant. Over the past year, I have raised a number of questions about the grant, such as overlooked critical infrastructure and I’m glad DHS included those changes,” stated Congresswoman Matsui. “However, I’m still concerned that Sacramento and all heavily populated urban areas will have to worry each year about whether DHS will arbitrarily change the number of eligible cities and thus, if they will even be able to apply for funding. For that reason I am introducing the UASI Improvement Act. This legislation will also make certain that instead of making arbitrary decisions, DHS uses conclusive data to inform its policy.”

The UASI Improvement Act of 2007 addresses the concerns in two parts. First it will allow the 100 most populous urban areas, as determined by the census and the DHS Secretary, to apply for UASI funds. While each urban area does not have to apply, those urban areas that meet the eligibility guidelines will at least be able to apply for these vital funds. Second, the bill ensures that DHS conduct a sensitivity analysis. “Sensitivity” analysis is a study of how the variation in the output of models (numerical or otherwise) used for determining risk changes outcomes.

In their investigation GAO analyzed the risk methodology and the effectiveness of the assessment, in addition to reviewing planned changes to both in the upcoming year. The early findings of the GAO review found that DHS’s decision to arbitrarily assign values during the risk-assignment without conducting a sensitivity analysis to be a significant

flaw in the UASI grant determination process. While the report is not yet final, the early report confirms that DHS had made many random decisions during their UASI determination that skewed the outcomes of the risk-scenarios and grant awards.

Congresswoman Matsui continued, "Our local law enforcement and first responders continue to do an incredible job understanding the threats facing our country and are working hard to prevent and prepare for an attack. And while these heroes are doing their jobs, the federal government needs to do its job. Part of that is providing leadership by setting standards and the other is to provide resources. My concern is that the federal government has been shirking its responsibility, and so I am introducing legislation to make sure that Sacramento and all at-risk urban areas have the opportunity to receive the funds they need."

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