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Washington, DC &ndash; Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) joined with Congressman Tom Petri (WI-6), Vice Chair of the Education and the Workforce Committee, to introduce the Troops to Teachers Improvement Act of 2006. This will expand the number of schools eligible to participate in the Troops to Teachers program &ndash; a drafting error in the No Child Left Behind Act limited the number of schools in which veterans can fulfill their teaching requirement. This invaluable program provides incentives to disabled and retiring military to obtain the necessary certification for a second career in teaching. Equally important, the program places much needed math, science and special education teachers in the classroom.

&ldquo;At a time when seven percent of the nation&rsquo;s teach forces leaves every year and there is an overwhelming need for highly-qualified Science and Math teachers, expanding the Troops to Teachers program has never been more important,&rdquo; continued Congresswoman Matsui. &ldquo;This legislation ensures that veterans teach in high-need schools first and foremost, but are not locked out of the program based on the geographic make-up of their communities. &rdquo;

Troops to Teachers is a unique program that provides stipends to retiring military personnel to teach in school districts with large low-income populations and a shortage of teachers in math and science. Since its authorization in 1993, nearly 10,000 veterans have participated in the program - bringing important math, science, and foreign language expertise to our classrooms. Unfortunately, because of a drafting error in the No Child Left Behind Act, the Department of Education restricted the number of school districts in which veterans can fulfill their teaching requirement and receive the stipend. This means that even though all 350 schools in Sacramento had been eligible when the Troops to Teachers program began, the error resulted in 139 of those schools no longer being eligible. Since the implementation of the ruling in September 2005, retiring military have found the number of schools in which they would be eligible to teach drastically reduced.

This legislation is a compromise between the Department's rule and the original authorization, as it would still require veterans to teach in high-need schools (as defined by the Department). However, if no such school exists within a 50-mile radius of a veteran, they will be eligible to fulfill their obligation in a school that serves low-income students under the original definition of high-need, which was a school receiving Title I funds

In introducing the Troops to Teachers Improvement Act of 2006, Congresswoman Matsui cited conversations she had with two different veterans at a California Purple Heart Veterans Day in Sacramento. &ldquo;These veterans joined our Armed Forces because of their commitment to the future of this country and for them that dedication did not end when they left the military. The Troops to Teachers program allows them to continue to serve their country.&rdquo;

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