

Congresswoman Matsui Applauds Passage of Funding for Troop Training & Equipment Expresses disappointment

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Expresses disappointment that Congress has only passed one of 13 annual funding bills

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Washington, DC – Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) spoke from the floor on the fiscal year 2007 Department of Defense Appropriations Bill Conference Report. While she commended the conference report for funding the training and the equipment for our troops, the Congresswoman expressed disappointment that not a single appropriations bill has been signed into law. Included in the bill is a continuing resolution (CR) – a stopgap spending measure to fund programs in those appropriations bills not completed by the start of the new fiscal year – to fund the government through November 17th.

Below is the text of her remarks [as prepared for delivery].

“Mr. Speaker, the rule before us makes in order a conference report for the fiscal year 2007 defense appropriations bill. It will be the first conference agreement to pass both chambers. And it will do so on-time. That should be commended.

“However, the Majority’s Leadership has yet to come to agreement on much else. As a result, the conferees were forced to include a continuing resolution that will keep the federal government open for business through November 17th.

“Mr. Speaker, the conference agreement itself is a responsible effort to support our troops in the field. Thanks to the effort of Subcommittee Chairman Young and Ranking Member Murtha, we will continue to invest in modernizing our military. But just as important, we will fund the training and the equipment our troops need to complete their mission — wherever they are stationed.

“No one disagrees that the war in Iraq has placed a significant strain on our Armed Forces. An article in yesterday’s New York Times describes the situation starkly.

“Other than the 17 brigades in Iraq and Afghanistan, only two or three combat brigades in the entire Army — perhaps 7,000 to 10,000 troops — are fully trained and sufficiently equipped to respond quickly to crises, said a senior Army general.”

“Mr. Speaker, at this point I ask unanimous consent to introduce the full article into the record.

“Mr. Speaker, I was pleased that conferees recognize this growing crisis in the military and took steps to mitigate it. Specifically, the conference agreement provides \$20 billion in additional funds to ensure that the needs of the Army and the Marine Corps for fiscal year 2007 are fully funded.

“This agreement also includes forward-thinking provisions. Ranking Member Murtha included language in the House bill prohibiting permanent U.S. bases in Iraq. I was pleased to join many of my colleagues in supporting that language. I appreciate that conferees preserved and strengthened this policy in the final agreement. Quite simply, intentions matter. And clarity in the United States — intentions is needed more so in Iraq than anywhere else.

“There are many other smart provisions included in this agreement. The bill includes a 2.2 percent pay increase for all members of the Armed Forces. It increases mental health and posttraumatic stress syndrome research. And it provides funds for the replacement of National Guard and Reserve equipment lost in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“But finally, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this agreement for the simple fact that it is on-time. Conferees worked together over several weeks to produce a very balanced conference agreement. It should be a model for the work Congress still has to do.

“With only a few days remaining in this fiscal year, not a single appropriations bill has been signed into law. This is not new. In the last five years, only 6 of 68 appropriations bills were finished on time.

“Some may try to shift blame to the other chamber. But the Majority has no one to blame but itself. Again I turn to another article in yesterday’s New York Times, which summarizes the situation quite clearly.

“While Republicans prefer to blame Democrats for the backlog, intramural fights and sharp differences between House and Senate Republicans have been chief impediments to major legislation.”

“I ask unanimous consent to introduce the full text of this article into the record.

“Mr. Speaker, the 109th Congress has had fewer voting days than almost any other Congress in history. We have lost precious weeks on politics as we debated bills that would never become law.

“And as a result, Congress will leave Washington this week with many of the American people’s priorities unfinished. There will be no lobbying reform. No comprehensive immigration reform. Congress will have ignored the millions of seniors stuck in the prescription drug benefit donut hole.

“As I said last year when I also managed a prior continuing resolution, this Congress needs new and better priorities. Until then, delays will continue and deadlines will be missed. And we will end up here, every year, with last-minute solutions to keep the federal government open for business.

“In closing, Mr. Speaker, the conference report made in order under this rule affirms our support for the men and women of the U.S. military. I commend the conferees for their work, especially Subcommittee Chairman Young and Ranking Member Murtha. They made great progress in a short period of time by working together. I would challenge the rest of my colleagues to do the same.”

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