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Washington, DC — Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) spoke out against H.R. 4844, which would add unnecessary burdens and obstacles to a voter's ability to cast their ballot. This legislation, likely to be deemed unconstitutional, would require any individual who registers or re-registers to vote in an election for federal office to provide photo id and proof of citizenship by 2010.

"Voting is a sacred right — a right that, unfortunately, seems to be under attack in this Congress. Congress should not be in the practice of disenfranchising voters under the guise of protecting the right to vote," stated Congresswoman Matsui. "We're debating legislation that is quite likely to be struck down by the Supreme Court. As recently as yesterday, state photo ID laws were found to be unconstitutional. This is because photo ID laws disproportionately affect racial and ethnic minorities, the elderly, people with disabilities, rural voters, students, the homeless, low-income people, and frequent movers."

This legislation creates more problems in trying to address a problem that does not exist. There is no known instance in which a non-citizen was found to have fraudulently attempted to vote. Legislation has multiple problems. Additionally, the costs associated with obtaining a passport, birth certificate or replacing lost or damaged naturalization certificates to fulfill the proof of citizenship requirements are a form of poll tax. And most importantly, H.R. 4844 not only violates the 14th and 24th amendments of our Constitution, but it also violates Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act — the expiring portions of which were reauthorized by the 109th Congress barely two months ago.

In outlining her opposition, Congresswoman Matsui highlighted voting concerns that should be a higher priority, "Just last week a professor at Princeton hacked into an e-voting machine, yet Congress is doing nothing to address the problems with our voting system. That's what Congress should be working on now — ensuring our voting machines are not susceptible to tampering and that those machines have a paper trail."

Congress also failed to address the problems faced by hundreds of thousands of Hurricane Katrina victims, who are now dispersed across the country. Many of whom lost their birth certificates in the muddy waters left by the hurricane and cannot obtain a replacement because the region's hospitals also lost their records in the hurricane. .

Concluded Congresswoman Matsui, "Rather than address these serious concerns with the voting machines, Congress has decided to take up a bill that seeks to limit the rights of legal voters. Congress must work on ways to encourage voter participation, not create undue obstacles to vote."

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