

Congresswoman Matsui Calls for Real Reform of Congress

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Washington, DC - Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) gave the following floor statement calling for real reform of Congress as the House debates H. Res. 1000. Instead of comprehensive reform, H. Res. 1000 provides only modest changes to the rules governing earmarks, but leaves open loopholes that fail to address the illegal practices widely reported in newspapers across the country. The Congresswoman has advocated for the adoption of the Honest Leadership, Open Government Act, which would enact tough reforms of lobbyist practices, as well as the Congressional practices lobbyists hope to influence.

The Honest Leadership, Open Government Act, H.R.4682, would ban travel on corporate jets, prohibit lobbyist gifts, slow the revolving door between Capitol Hill and K Street, shut down the "K Street" project in which jobs in lobbying firms were traded for legislative favors; shine the light on earmarks so that special interest provisions cannot be slipped into bills without public scrutiny, and put an end to some of the procedural abuses that have flourished in the Republican-controlled House.

Below is the text of the Congresswoman's remarks:

"Mr. Speaker, the American people are demanding real reform of Congress. This bill isn't it.

"The second session of the 109th Congress began with Members on both side of the aisle deeply concerned that the dignity of this great institution had been tarnished.

"Newspapers across the country ran stories almost every day about the illegal practices of well-connected lobbyists. Stories discussed the ways in which unethical conduct had become the cost of doing business in this Congress.

"We read about the K Street Project. We read about legislation written in secret by lobbyists and about backroom deals to benefit narrow special interests. Editorial boards from all fifty states called for reform.

"In May, the House passed a fundamentally-flawed approach to reform. It included some new restrictions on lobbyists, yes. But we showed no willingness to demand reform of ourselves. That sent a terrible message to our constituents.

"There is a better approach. I have joined many of my colleagues as a cosponsor of the Honest Leadership, Open Government Act.

"It injects transparency and accountability into Congress itself. There would be no more K Street Project. There would be

no more meals or gifts from lobbyists. No more travel on corporate jets.

“And it would ensure better legislation. Members would be guaranteed 24 hours to read a bill before voting on it. And we would end the common practice of last-minute provisions slipped into conference reports.

“The Majority is interested in none of this. This legislation was rejected in May along party lines. And since then, the House has not shown any interest in moving ahead with any meaningful reform.

“And so, here we are, in the waning days of the 109th Congress, debating only a narrow, earmark reform resolution full of exceptions and unlikely to pass.

“Every Member of this House knows that this bill is not what the American people demanded of us at the beginning of the year.

“Certainly, this resolution will not restore the integrity of the institution in which we serve.

“Mr. Speaker, the American people want reform. They will not be fooled by fig leaves. We still have time to act in a united fashion to restore the dignity of this House.

Unfortunately, this resolution falls far short of that necessary effort.”

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