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Washington, DC – Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) delivered the following heartfelt remarks on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives in support of renewing the expiring provisions of the Voting Rights Act for another quarter century.

“Since being signed into law four decades ago, the landmark Voting Rights Act has successfully been used to confront discrimination at the voting booth. But there is still more to be done. We need the tools and resources it provides,” stated Congresswoman Matsui. “The Voting Rights Act bridges the gap between the principle of one man, one vote and the reality, and will relegate that gap to the history books.”

Provisions which are set to expire include a requirement that areas with a documented history of discriminatory voting practices obtain federal approval prior to changes in election laws or voting procedures, as well as a provision that sets forth criteria for election monitoring by the Department of Justice. These provisions have significantly impacted the federal government’s ability to protect the right to vote and must be renewed.

Please click [here](#) to view a video of Congresswoman Matsui delivering the following remarks:

“The idea of one-person, one-vote – regardless of race, background, or gender – is a fundamental principle of this nation.

“The practical application, however, is another matter. American history is a testament to this fact. Despite the 15th Amendment to the Constitution, our history, is filled with efforts to prevent people from voting. Literacy tests. Poll Taxes. Threats. And even violence, as my colleague and dear friend, Congressman John Lewis, can attest.

“The hundreds of thousands of men and women of the civil rights movement also bear witness to the fact that through effort and sheer determination, we can close the gap between the principle as enshrined in the Constitution and the reality. The 1965 Voting Rights Act.

“As President Johnson once said, “The vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls which imprison men because they are different from other men.

“Now we are here for the renewal of the Voting Rights Act- Democrats and Republicans crafted a bipartisan bill. Supporters were prepared to pass it weeks ago, but the majority leadership was thwarted by opposition within their own party.

“Regrettably, the Voting Rights Act, despite its storied history, apparently remains controversial among a faction of the majority party.

“The members of my caucus support full consideration of issues and amendments. But it is disheartening that to permit a floor debate on the Voting Rights Act reauthorization, a number of my Republican colleagues demanded consideration of extremely inflammatory amendments — ones which would essentially eviscerate the Voting Rights Act.

“Most members of this chamber — Democrats and Republicans alike — believe the Voting Rights Act long ago proved itself to be a force for good in this country. It’s disappointing that some still need convincing.

“I am particularly troubled by the amendment on the need for bilingual ballots, especially on the heels of the divisive House and Senate debates over immigration.

“That’s why it’s important to focus on one salient fact: Three quarters of those who use the language assistance provision are native-born Americans and the rest are legally-naturalized citizens.

So this amendment aims to restrict the rights of fully law abiding citizens of the United States.

“Since being signed into law four decades ago, this landmark legislation has successfully been used to confront discrimination at the voting booth. But we still need the tools and resources of the Voting Rights Act.

“It bridges the gap between the principle of one man, one vote and the reality, and will relegate that gap to the history books.”

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