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Matsui Offers Amendments to Also Reform House Practices

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Washington, DC - Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) highlighted the need for Congress to focus on its own practices, in addition to the practices of lobbyists, as the Rules Committee held a hearing on lobbying reform legislation. Additionally, she offered amendments that would increase the transparency of the conference committee (where the members of the House and Senate negotiate their respective chamber's version of the legislation) and allow Members at least 24 hours to review legislation before it is brought to the floor for a debate.

"The abuse of power that has occurred in Congress has shaken the faith people have in our government," said Congresswoman Matsui. "Congress must address this beyond lobbyist reform and member travel" they are the tip of the iceberg. We must not only change the practices of lobbyists, but also the process lobbyists hope to influence."

As she offered an amendment to allow Members 24-hours to review legislation, the Congresswoman mentioned, "All too often Members have very little time to read the legislation. Take the Medicare prescription drug benefit, Members had less than two-hours to read the 850-page conference report. This damages the honor of this institution, but worse yet, it is a disservice to the American people."

Additionally, in offering the second amendment requiring a roll-call vote, in an open meeting, on the final version of a conference report, she stated, "If the agreement can't stand public scrutiny, it shouldn't pass. I point to the example FY '06 Defense Appropriations Conference Report. Unbeknownst to even most members of the conference committee, language giving blanket liability protections for avian flu manufacturers was added to the conference report in a backroom deal after it had been negotiated. This amendment would result in an actual vote by the conferees before the conference report could be brought debated by the House.

"And this wasn't the first time this has happened! In 2002 a provision was slipped into the Department of Homeland Security appropriations, which was a blanket liability for a different vaccine thought to have a connection to autism.

"Through increased transparency and open government we can counter these gross abuses of our process. Because as the process currently stands, special interests are put ahead of the public interest every time."

Congresswoman Matsui serves on the House Rules Committee. A proponent of reforming both the practices of lobbyists as well as the practices of Congress, Congresswoman Matsui has cosponsored multiple pieces of legislation that will counter the abuses of our process and create a more transparent and open government.

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