

Matsui Calls for Comprehensive Reform Package as Rules Committee Holds 1st Hearing on Need for Refo

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"To fail to address congressional practices is like a fire department showing up at a burning houseâ€¦pledging to reform the fire codeâ€¦but leaving the house on fire."

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Washington, DC - Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5), during a Rules Committee Hearing â€” the first in the House on the need for reform â€” repeated the need for changing not only the practices of lobbyists, but also on the need to reform the process the lobbyists hope to influence. Additionally, the Congresswoman cited the package of reforms she introduced with her fellow Democratic Rules Committee members, which would address both.

"Congress should enact tough reforms of lobbying practices. The scope of what we are reading about truly takes oneâ€™s breath away. In my experience, Iâ€™ve never seen anything remotely like it," stated Congresswoman Matsui. "But Congress needs to have the will to focus on itself as well. Lobbyists are only as effective as Members and staff allow them to be."

The Congresswoman heard experts testify that to focus on the gift ban, travel ban or prohibiting former Members of Congress who are lobbyists from the House floor and the House gym is case of misplaced priorities. And that while increasing transparency is good, it needs to be on both sides as the House practices in place now, particularly the conference process only fuels the problem.

Expressing the urgency in moving forward common-sense legislation, the Congresswomen cited the young people in Sacramento, "I can see their growing disillusionment with government. Many practices currently in place by the leadership empower the corruption that has shaken the faith people have in our leadership."

In fact, the legislation Congresswoman Matsui introduced with her Democratic colleagues on the Rules Committee would amend the rules of the House to restore transparency, accountability and oversight to the legislative process and make it more difficult for the majority party to silence the voice of the minority.

In her opening remarks at the Rules Committee hearing, Congresswoman Matsui gave the following statement:

"It has been more than two months since papers across the country began breaking stories about the depth of corruption here in Congress. The scope of this corruption truly takes oneâ€™s breath away â€” in my experience, Iâ€™ve never seen or read anything remotely like it.

"Weâ€™re here today â€” in the first hearing on this issue in the U.S. House of Representatives since the scandal â€” to hear expert witnesses about what reforms are needed to restore faith in Congress and its elected representatives. Obviously, the reform of lobbying practices is long overdue. But the problem resides not only with lobbyists, but here inside the Congress as well. We must not only change the practices of lobbyists, but also reform the process lobbyists hope to influence. Lobbyists are only as effective as Members and staff allow them to be.

"The result of this process is legislation put forth by the majority that puts special interests ahead of the public interest every time.

"I firmly believe it is a fundamental responsibility of all elected representatives to leave behind a country stronger and better prepared for the future than the one they found. But the way this Congress functions means this is not happening.

"This is more than just process. It is about the legislation that impacts our way of life. Congress should enact tough

reforms of lobbying practices. But Congress needs to have the will to focus on itself as well. Many practices currently in place by the leadership empower the corruption that has shaken the faith people have in our leadership.

â€œI look forward to working with all of my colleagues to restore faith in this Congress.â€•

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