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Washington, DC – In a pre-dawn session, Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) weighed the pros and cons of the conference report for the FY ‘06 Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, ultimately placing the highest priority on ensuring our men and women serving in harms way have the funding they need. “Despite my opposition to drilling in the arctic refuge and even more funding cuts to critical programs, I cannot allow our troops on the battlefield to be placed unnecessarily at risk,” stated Congresswoman Matsui. “Additionally, because this Administration has vacillated on the issue of torture, it is therefore critical to our troops, as well as our standing in the world, that we enshrine into law that the United States does not condone the use of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment of prisoners in our custody.” While the legislation does include items the Congresswoman firmly opposes – opening the Arctic Refuge (ANWR) to drilling and the one percent across the board cut to discretionary funding – there were other important policy items that require immediate attention. Included in the appropriations bill was critical funding to make certain the nation is prepared for avian flu, beginning the post-Hurricane Katrina rebuilding effort, as well as clearly state the nation’s policy opposing torture. Continued Matsui, “This legislation does have faults and ignores many of our nation’s priorities. An across the board cut will further harm already underfunded programs like ‘No Child Left Behind,’ community health centers, Community Development Block Grants, and local law enforcement block grants. The environmental and long-term damage of drilling in the Arctic refuge far outweighs the possible short-term gain our nation could eventually get because of the drilling. I firmly oppose both of these provisions.” Congresswoman Matsui has a strong record of opposition to opening the Arctic refuge to oil and gas exploration as well as a long record of urging Congress to reevaluate its budgetary priorities. This includes opposing a one percent across-the-board cut in discretionary programs. “This appropriations bill clearly demonstrates why Congress needs new leadership. Because of this deeply flawed legislation, we were forced to make a false choice. With our nation at war, we all know that the Defense Appropriations bill is a must-pass piece of legislation. We should not allow personal agendas to get in the way of our unified message of support for our troops.”

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