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Urges Congress to place higher priority on meeting nation's needs, not tax cuts

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Washington, DC – During another late night debate on spending cuts, Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) made the following statement in opposition to the Budget Reconciliation Spending Conference Report. The legislation, in order to fund additional tax cuts, would cut funding for vital programs like, student aid, Medicaid, and foster care, while ultimately increasing the fiscal deficit. Further, the legislation threatens the nation's ability to reduce the deficit as we fund the recovery from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the War in Iraq as well as the rebuilding of both Iraq and Afghanistan.

“Today we begin to debate this budget package and attempt to wrap up legislative business for the year. As we do so, many members find themselves thinking about going home to be with their families.

“For me, I look forward to spending time with my family and particularly my two year-old granddaughter Anna. As many of my colleagues already know, Anna is the driving force behind my work in Congress – I want to make sure that we create policy that is best for Anna and those in her generation who do not have a say in what we are doing here today.

“Therefore, I favor reducing the deficit. Anna and her generation should not have to bear the burden of the debt this Congress has created. But Congress must reduce the deficit in a responsible manner that results in a shared sacrifice.

“Unfortunately, H.R. 4241 fails to do this. It disproportionately places the burden of these cuts on a few. And it also imposes cuts on key programs including Medicaid, child support enforcement and student loans.

“When I consider how these cuts will impact my constituents and their families back in Sacramento — not to mention Anna and her friends — it is clear this is not a conscientious way to cut spending.

“For example, one of the critical programs cut in this bill are student loans. By doing so we are placing greater financial stress on students who are already spread thin.

“Recently I met with a group of students from Sacramento State, who reiterated this point to me. Each one of them stressed the importance of student loans in financing their education.

“We need to be investing in the future to compete in the global marketplace. But, by cutting these loan programs we are undercutting America’s ability to compete.

“This is only one example of the impact of these cold-hearted spending cuts. Spending cuts necessary to finance the tax breaks in this budget package.

“We need to restore fiscal responsibility in a way that makes sense — in a way that aligns with the priorities of the American people. But the draconian cuts in this bill will not accomplish that. If you showed the American people the tradeoffs in this budget, they would tell Congress to go back to the drawing board and get it right. They would urge us to fund vital programs before cutting taxes for the fifth time in five years.

“Why rush through legislation that could have tremendous repercussions on so many in this nation? Instead, I would urge my colleagues to vote down this bill — take this holiday season to reflect on our nation’s true priorities and needs. Let’s start fresh next year and figure out a way to protect future generations without impeding this government’s ability to help those that need it the most.”

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