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September 28, 2005

Wednesday, September 28, 2005

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Washington, DC — Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) praised the passage of bipartisan legislation reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) — a key element to combat crimes often targeted towards women — for another four years. “Because of the Violence Against Women Act we have made great strides in addressing domestic violence,” said Matsui. “In reauthorizing these programs we will assist organizations that offer services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault like Sacramento’s Women Escaping a Violent Environment and California Coalition Against Sexual Assault. And by supporting these organizations, our entire community is better off.” Included in this bipartisan legislation is the reauthorization of critical programs that address intervention and prioritizing violence prevention — programs that will ensure victims have the economic security to escape violent relationships, support the development of community responses and public education campaigns to raise public awareness and make violence unacceptable, and develop a comprehensive plan to assist children exposed to violence. Congress passed VAWA in 1994 to improve the criminal justice system’s response to violence by training police and prosecutors to respond more effectively. While 960,000 incidents of violence are reported against a current or former spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend, that number has decreased by nearly 50% since the legislation was first passed. Additionally, the reauthorization of VAWA coincided with Congresswoman Matsui’s announcement that two organizations in Sacramento received grants from the Department of Justice’s Office on Violence Against Women. The California Alliance Against Domestic Violence received \$85,457 from the State Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Coalitions Program. This grant will fund much needed programs and address the changing needs of shelter clientele and allow them to assist in reaching out to underserved populations. A portion of the funding will also help the organization work with law enforcement and the judicial system as well as allow them to hold statewide and regional workshops to promote coalition building and address gaps in service delivery. The California Coalition Against Sexual Assault also received a \$85,457 grant from the State Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Coalitions Program as well as a \$1.2 million grant that will allow them to bring additional resources to the victims of domestic violence. The VAWA reauthorization, included in the reauthorization of the Department of Justice, needs to be voted on by the Senate, approved by both chambers and signed by the president. ###

