

MATSUI SUPPORTS PROTECTION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES, VOTES AGAINST PATRIOT ACT

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Washington, DC – Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) voted against the reauthorization of the USA Patriot Act citing the bill’s failure to balance our nation’s security and protection of civil liberties. While key provisions, which have the potential to be abused and violate the civil liberties of American citizens, are ignored entirely, other provisions within the bill lack essential sunset clauses and therefore do not ensure Congress’s continued oversight.

[Click here to view Congresswoman Matsui's floor statement on the Patriot Act](#)

“The Patriot Act challenges the intrinsic rights guaranteed by our Constitution – and Congress would be negligent in our responsibility if we did not maintain constant vigilance to ensure that no one’s civil liberties are violated,” stated Matsui. “Through the use of sunset clauses that do not wait for two presidential elections to pass before expiring, we would be forced to revisit the provisions – guaranteeing our attentiveness.” The bill neglects to sufficiently tackle the two most controversial and provocative measures of the Patriot Act. As written “sneak and peak” searches continue to allow the government to delay notifying people – for months – their homes had been searched or property seized. Additionally, it extends for a decade, through 2015, the FBI’s ability to seize records of books checked out from the library without requiring the government to notify

individuals that it is investigating their reading habits. This provision is otherwise set to expire at the end of the year.

During the Rules Committee hearing on the reauthorization of the Patriot Act, Matsui highlighted the need for caution, drawing on historical perspective, “…during World War II – under the banner of security – the civil liberties of thousands of Japanese Americans vanished. Although I was only a baby in the camps, throughout my life I clearly saw and felt how deeply this affected my parents.” Also during the Rules Committee’s hearing, Matsui questioned the “national security letters” provision of the bill – permanently authorized when the legislation was passed in 2001 – and why it was not being revisited. This provision allows the Justice Department to issue subpoenas, “national security letters,” ordering a person to turn over a very broad range of documents. Under this provision, which the Southern District of New York has found to violate the 4th Amendment, the recipient is not allowed to tell anybody about it, including an attorney. During the hearing she offered an amendment to allow floor debate on an amendment which would require the Justice Department to clearly define that the letters only be used when related to foreign nationals or terrorists. The amendment was voted down. Concluded Matsui, “While we are all in agreement that we must do all we can to secure and protect the United States – we cannot do so at the expense of those rights and privileges upon which this great nation was founded.” ###