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## MATSUI QUESTIONS GOP EFFORTS TO REDUCE WORKER SAFETY

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Washington, DC —Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) stood up for America's workers — speaking out against the Republican legislation that would undermine workplace safety standards established by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) while strongly speaking in support of an increase in the minimum wage.

“This legislation is a one-sided rollback of workplace safety laws that would result in increases in workplace injury, illness and quite possibly death,” said Matsui. “Congress should be making laws to improve workers' lives by strengthening workplace safety. But unfortunately, the Republican leadership has put forward legislation that does the exact opposite.”

The quartet of bills debated on the floor will endanger America's workers. The legislation, H.R. 739, 740, 741 and 742, will undercut the ability of OSHA to enforce its own rules. These bills also create a legal loophole which would allow businesses to stall and avoid addressing a safety violation.

Again this year, Democrats tried to improve the economic security of this country's workers. As Republican leadership tried to reduce worker protections, Democrats advocated that rather than attacking OSHA, Congress would do more good by slowly raising the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25 an hour by the end of 2007. Sadly, the Republican leadership used a procedural maneuver to block the minimum wage proposal from being considered or debated on the floor of the House.

Matsui added, “Raising the minimum wage would better allow Sacramento workers to meet the basic challenges they face everyday like paying rent, putting food on the table and getting access to health care. It is truly a statement of Republican leadership's misguided priorities that in the same breath, they advocate reducing worker safety and

refuse to permit a vote on raising the minimum wage.”;

House Republicans argued that this legislation will help small businesses; however Liberty Mutual, the largest workers’ compensation insurance company, estimates that the direct cost of occupational injuries and illnesses is \$1 billion a week.

“It is essential for Congress to encourage small business growth, but considering the massive cost of workplace incidents, businesses would profit far more from having safe and healthy workers,” said Matsui. “Ensuring healthier, safer workplaces will benefit businesses small and large.”;

Concluded Matsui, “Congress can estimate the cost of the bills, but it is unable to estimate the cost to America’s workers &hellip; the lives lost or the injuries sustained as a result of this misguided legislation.”;

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