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Programs important to Sacramento – Amtrak, CDBG – get slashed

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Washington, DC – Congresswoman Matsui is highlighting the negative impacts of the Republican majority's budget on effective programs included in the Transportation-Treasury-HUD-Judiciary-District of Columbia-Independent Agencies Appropriations Bill.

"Mr. Speaker, we have seen repeated appropriation bills move through the House ignoring the priorities of Americans, including those residing in my hometown of Sacramento. With each bill we see the negative impact of the Republican-passed budget resolution on the day-to-day lives of our constituents.

"As we take up the Transportation-Treasury-HUD-Judiciary-District of Columbia-Independent Agencies Appropriations Bill, also known as the throw the leftovers into one Tupperware catch-all bill, we yet again see the bind the budget resolution has placed us in. We see the programs important to all of our constituents and our communities forced to compete amongst each other for limited funding and we see these programs being gutted.

"As it stands, this bill dismantles Amtrak – slashing funding by over half – threatening its long-term health. With 9.3 million passengers in California, Amtrak is extremely popular, especially in Sacramento.

"With the line closures and funding cuts, it will be impossible for Amtrak to continue to operate. After severance obligations and debt service pay, nothing would remain to continue running even the lines deemed successful. Further complicating the situation, the bill fails to even fund the minimum maintenance on tracks and trains necessary to keep the thriving lines operational.

"I cannot begin to estimate the negative impact this will have. Businesses which rely on the dollars commuters spend in the community and the revitalization of the city – a transformation that is not exclusive to my hometown – will be affected.

"Because of Amtrak, Sacramentans are rediscovering downtown. And with funding from the Community

Development Block Grants, the city is able to make needed improvements to downtown and the entire city. And that is a benefit to businesses and the overall economy of our region and state.

“CDBG supports over two dozens projects improving Sacramento. But CDBG isn’t just throwing money at a city. In addition to improving the overall look of a city, it also fosters a sense of community.

(continued…)

“Earlier this year I was home in Sacramento and participated in a program which receives money form CDBG called Rebuilding Together, an effort to rehabilitate homes for those with low and moderate incomes. Hundreds of people came out to give back to their community and neighborhood.

“And because of their work, a local senior citizen who would otherwise find it challenging, received assistance to make the enhancements and repairs her home needs.

“And because of funding from CDBG, Sacramento has a program to assist first-time homebuyers with down payment and closing costs. We all know the benefits of homeownership to the community – improved neighborhoods and increased civic participation – and to the individual – tax benefits, increased wealth and increased confidence.

“Unfortunately the misguided priorities of the Republican passed budget mean cuts to funding for worthwhile programs like CDBG and Amtrak.

“But this did not have to be the case. I was disappointed that an amendment offered by my good friend, Ranking Member Olver was not made in order by the Rules Committee. It would have restored the necessary dollars to fund programs like Amtrak and CDBG, by reducing the tax benefits of those with incomes above \$1 million. Instead of receiving a tax break of \$140,000, they would receive \$131,000 – a \$9,000 reduction.

“Because of the need for the Olver Amendment, and importantly the need to continue these effective programs, I would urge my colleagues to vote no on the rule governing this bill.”

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