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Calls on Federal Government to Acknowledge Local Efforts

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, Rep. Doris Matsui (CA-05) introduced H.R. 6285, an important flood insurance initiative that would require FEMA to take local funding into account when determining flood insurance designations. In Natomas and the Sacramento region, local and state entities have undertaken substantial responsibility in securing the region's flood protection infrastructure. These efforts must be taken into account when determining the level of progress achieved towards reaching flood protection goals. Currently, the rules do not allow local and state money to count toward completion of a project which can downgrade a community's flood designation.

"The local and state partners who have worked so vigorously to increase our flood protection infrastructure must have their efforts taken into account by FEMA. Here in Sacramento, we work very hard to keep people, homes, and communities safe from floods. Those efforts must be recognized by FEMA when determining how to designate our region," said Rep. Matsui.

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) requires that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designate lands according the risk of flooding. When lands do not have at least 100 year flood protection, those lands are typically placed into a Zone AE, at which time new building construction cannot occur unless structures are elevated. The NFIP also recognizes several special designations applicable to lands without 100 year flood protection, but for which certain construction may occur.

One of these is the A99 Special Flood Hazard Designation, under which construction can continue. This designation can be awarded to areas that meet stringent criteria demonstrating adequate progress toward 100 year flood protection. However, under this statute and FEMA's regulations, only communities with federally funded levee improvements, not state or locally funded improvements, are eligible for this designation.

"Public safety is always my number one priority. As we move forward, I intend to keep pressure on the federal partners to recognize what we are doing at the local level. Brokering these collaborative partnerships is a key component to making sure that we maximize the investment in our regional flood protection," said Rep. Matsui.

H.R. 6285 will provide much needed equity in determining flood insurance designations. This bill would allow for Federal, state, or local funds to count towards an A99 flood insurance designation. States and communities across the country are investing millions of dollars into flood infrastructure. H.R. 6285 will require FEMA to take this investment into account and recognize local commitment to obtaining adequate flood protection.

"Over the last few weeks, we have witnessed our fellow Americans in the Midwest experience the havoc a flood can wreak on our neighborhoods and homes. In Sacramento, we are acutely aware that we must make investments now to ensure our regional safety for generations to come," said Rep. Matsui.