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October 23, 2007

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Washington, D.C. - Today, Reps. Doris Matsui (CA-05) and Mario Diaz-Balart (FL-25) introduced legislation to make buildings safer and increase public safety. Strong building codes will help strengthen emergency preparedness against natural disasters.

The Safe Building Codes Act of 2007 will create incentives for states to adopt and enforce high safety standards, helping to protect communities in the event a natural disaster strikes. States that enact comprehensive building codes would qualify for additional disaster relief funding. States that have a mandatory statewide building code and have enforcement measures in place would be eligible for an addition four percent of federal disaster relief funds. Additionally, this legislation will enable states to utilize existing pre-disaster mitigation grants to establish and administer building code programs prior to the occurrence of a disaster.

“As we have seen in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and the collapse of the Minneapolis bridge, we need to make investments in the buildings and structures we rely upon. My top priority is keeping my constituents safe, and my legislation will help to preserve property and promote public safety,” said Rep. Matsui. “Strong building codes serve as the backbone of a community’s preparedness against natural disasters.”

“As Hurricane Andrew demonstrated to us in Florida, building codes matter,” said Rep. Diaz-Balart. “This legislation will reward states that have building codes that prepare for the threat of a natural disaster. Our goal is to make families and communities safer by being smart with American taxpayer dollars.”

Stronger, more modern building codes will make buildings more likely to withstand higher impacts, helping them to remain intact in the event of a disaster. The proactive action taken by this legislation aims to reduce the amount of taxpayer dollars spent on recovery efforts.

“We view this legislation as a win for everyone. Homeowners with homes built according to stronger codes will see less damage to their homes following storms, while taxpayers will also save money by not having to pay out as much money in future disaster aid to those states that have stronger codes,” said Justin Roth, Senior Federal Affairs Director of the National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies (NAMIC).

Research has shown that having nationally-recognized standards for building codes can provide a tremendous level of protection. The Louisiana State University Hurricane Center has estimated that of the \$10 billion in damage to homes in Louisiana, modern building codes would have spared 80 percent of the damage.

The Safe Building Codes Act has been endorsed by a large coalition of groups, companies and organizations, including: Allstate Insurance Company, American Insurance Association (AIA), Farmers Insurance Group of Companies, Federal Alliance for Safe Homes (FLASH), Financial Services Roundtable (FSR), Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS), Independent Insurance Agents and Brokers of America (IIABA), International Code Council, Liberty Mutual Insurance, MetLife, National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies (NAMIC), National Fire Protection Association, Nationwide Insurance, NeighborWorks America, Property and Casualty Insurers Association of America (PCIAA), St. Paul Travelers, Simpson Strong-Tie Co., Solutia, State Farm Insurance Companies, The Hartford and USAA Insurance.

Original cosponsors of the legislation are: Reps. Doris Matsui (CA-05), Mario Diaz-Balart (FL-25), Lincoln Diaz-Balart (FL-21), Grace Napolitano (CA-38), Earl Blumenauer (OR-03), Ginny Browne-Waite (FL-05), and Ander Crenshaw (FL-04).

“Here in California, we are experiencing unprecedented population growth. The building standards that we establish now will lay the groundwork for providing a stable and safe community for generations to come,” said Matsui.

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