

Matsui Supports Legislation to Punish Unfair Gas-Pricing Tactics

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Washington, DC - Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-05) twice this week voted in favor of legislation designed to provide relief for persistently high gasoline prices. Both bills (the No Oil Producing and Exporting Cartels Act and the Federal Price Gouging Prevention Act) increase the ability of federal law enforcement authorities to prosecute illegal gas-pricing practices.

"Hard-working Americans are finding it more and more difficult to fill up their cars. Gas is simply too expensive, especially in California, and Congress must step in to correct this growing problem," said Matsui. "During a time when costs are rising for everything from basic health care to college tuition, families should not have to worry about breaking the bank by driving to the store or taking the kids to soccer practice. As a result, the Democratic Congress is taking concrete steps to protect the American people from illegal and exploitative gas prices."

The Energy Information Administration has documented significant evidence of price-setting collusion committed by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which controls nearly half of the world's known oil reserves. The No Oil Producing and Exporting Cartels Act (H.R. 2264) bans this practice, by which OPEC nations intentionally limit petroleum supplies as a way to increase artificially the price of gasoline. H.R. 2264 passed on Tuesday by the overwhelming bipartisan margin of 345 to 72.

The Federal Price Gouging Prevention Act (H.R. 1252) takes aim at the same sort of illegal market manipulation by increasing penalties for gasoline wholesalers and retailers who charge exorbitant prices during national energy emergencies. The bill, which Congresswoman Matsui co-sponsored, was approved earlier today with the strong support of over two-thirds of the House of Representatives.

Continued Matsui, "Artificially inflating gas prices during energy emergencies is exploitative and criminal, and the bill we pass today will halt this illegal practice. It builds upon previous Democratic achievements rolling back tax breaks for large oil companies, investing in renewable energy technologies, and reducing our dependence on foreign oil.

"This Congress is committed to transforming our economy, so that it no longer relies on environmentally harmful fossil fuels produced in some of the most volatile parts of the world."

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