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### The Importance of Planting Trees

*By Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui, California's 5th Congressional District*

During the markup of the Waxman-Markey clean energy economy legislation (H.R. 2454) on Wednesday, I offered an amendment to improve energy efficiency by encouraging the planting of shade trees to fight global warming, save electricity, and clean the air. My amendment was challenged by Rep. Marsha Blackburn (R-TN), who mentioned that her mother, a long-time garden club member, "received the Keep America Beautiful lifetime achievement award in 1997 for the work that she has done." The gentlelady from Tennessee asked me whether my program would hurt not-for-profit organizations in the name of fighting global warming:

"So, in addition to the U.S. Forest Service carrying out some of this good work, we have garden clubs all around the country. We have Boy Scout and Girl Scout clubs that work on Arbor Days, planting trees. So is it the gentlelady's intent that all of these organizations will be able to draw down this one-dollar-for-dollar match? Would they use that to grow their programs or would this have the unintended consequence of doing away with the corporate contributions that they receive, the charitable contributions they receive in order to help carry out those programs?"

In reality, my amendment establishes a competitive matching grant program for retail power providers to support new and existing tree-planting programs by non-profit organizations — like garden clubs, the Boy Scouts, and Keep America Beautiful. Matching grant programs, which require that federal monies be matched dollar-for-dollar by private donations, actually encourage charitable corporate contributions. I expressed to my colleagues that Congress should set standards for the utilities to ensure the money is well spent and energy efficiency is prioritized.

Rep. Blackburn further argued that this amendment would start "diminishing the work they have done while we say global warming and fighting global warming and paying umbrage to global warming is the objective of the legislation we're bringing forward." Fighting what the Garden

Club of America calls the “serious reality of global warming” requires everyone to work together – from members of Congress to members of 4-H. Which is why the Garden Club supports “federal, state and local legislation as well as individual initiatives to control greenhouse gases,” and why I offered this amendment.

I believe my fellow California Democrat, committee chair Henry Waxman put it best when he explained to Rep. Blackburn:

"I would be interested in whether you think that faith-based initiatives have harmed the religious and volunteer groups that were doing great things in the community, running drug abuse programs, and other things that — where they served a very worthwhile purpose and the government wanted them — to have them do the work and that set of government agencies to do it. So I show you a different aspect of it. I hear what you're saying and I wouldn't want those nonprofit groups to be pushed out of the way at all. But I think this would expand it. We would have more opportunities for people to do things together."

The legislation we passed out of the Energy and Commerce Committee Thursday night is an achievement for the American people, our planet, and for future generations. Once this legislation is signed into law, our children and grandchildren will live in a country that is more sustainable, more economically viable, and more efficient than the country we live in today. And for my hometown of Sacramento, this bill is more than an achievement; it is a necessity. I'm proud to support President Obama's challenge to all Americans to work together to repower America and save our planet. Big problems require big solutions, but this one can start with the simple planting of additional trees in our communities.