

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, November 18, 2010

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Congresswoman Matsui Statement on House Vote on Unemployment Insurance WAS HINGTON, D.C.

– Congresswoman Doris Matsui (D-Sacramento) stated her profound disappointment that the House of Representatives today failed to pass an extension of emergency unemployment benefits through the Emergency Unemployment Compensation Continuation Act, H.R. 6419, for Americans affected by the recent recession. Due to the urgent nature of the need for this funding, the bill was brought to the House floor under a suspension of the rules, and therefore requires a 2/3 majority to pass. Congresswoman Matsui issued the following statement:

“I am extremely disappointed that Republicans in Congress blocked this measure. In 75 years, the federal government has never cut off unemployment insurance benefits when the unemployment rate has been higher than 7.4 percent, let alone the current rate of 9.6 percent. This is not the time for partisanship; this is the time to work together to try and help struggling Americans.

“Unemployment insurance injects demand into the economy and helps people pay their bills and feed their families while they look for work. According to the Department of Labor, without action, the economic lifeline for two million Americans will be cut off during the holidays. By the end of February 2011, over 4.4 million workers would lose benefits. That is not acceptable.

“Average weekly unemployment insurance benefits are barely 70 percent of the poverty line for a family of four, and on average replaces less than 50 percent of a worker’s prior earnings. Yet this emergency funding for families in need would help keep millions of families in their home and out of poverty.

“I have heard from hundreds of unemployed Sacramentans who are struggling as a result of the economic collapse and subsequent recession. They are hard working Americans who have been laid-off through no fault of their own. And I can assure you, these people are not looking for a hand-out, they are looking for a hand-up.”

Congresswoman Matsui is an original co-sponsor of H.R. 6419. The legislation would extend the Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) and Extended Benefits programs through February 28, 2011. The temporary Federal unemployment insurance programs will start phasing out at the end of November without Congressional action.

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