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CONTACT: Alexis Marks

(202) 225-7163

Rep. Doris Matsui Votes to Delay Digital Television Transition

Delay Will Ensure That More than 2 Million People on Waiting List Will Have Uninterrupted Access to Television

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Rep. Doris Matsui (CA-05) voted to support S. 352, the Digital TV Delay Act. The bill implements a one-time delay of the scheduled February 17th elimination of analog television broadcasting until June 12, 2009. Passage of the bill by the House today will send it to the President's desk for his signature. The Senate passed the bill on January 29th by unanimous consent.

“The date of the scheduled DTV transition is rapidly approaching, and it has become increasingly apparent that existing programs to support the transition are insufficient. Recent reports from the Commerce Department show that 5,514 people in Sacramento are on the waiting list for a coupon. The converter box coupon program has reached its budgetary limits and is no longer processing new requests, which puts millions of viewers at jeopardy of losing television connectivity this month. Congress must delay this transition in order to protect those who have not received the coupons they were guaranteed in order to ensure that public safety and television access is preserved,” stated Rep. Matsui.

According to Commerce Department data, in just the last two business days, the size of this waiting list has grown by 200,000 households. There are now more than two million households on the waiting list for coupons. The DTV delay bill does the following:

- Delays the transition by 115 days (to June 12, 2009) and extends the license terms of the commercial and public safety entities that will use the DTV spectrum after the transition by a corresponding number of days.
- Permits consumers who never redeemed coupons to apply for replacement coupons, while ensuring that no household can redeem more than two coupons.
- Expressly preserves broadcasters' ability to transition before the new transition date, if such a move does not interfere with another broadcast signal. The Act makes clear that the existing FCC rules and regulations concerning interference and consumer education will continue to apply.
- Expressly preserves the ability of public safety entities to use the DTV spectrum before the new transition date, subject to existing FCC rules.

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