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CONTACT: Alexis Marks or Mara Lee
(202) 225-7163

Reps. Matsui and Petri Introduce 'Troops to Teachers' Improvement Act

Will Allow 150 More Sacramento Schools to Benefit from Program and Attract Veterans to Serve Again

Washington, DC – Representatives Doris Matsui (D-CA) and Tom Petri (R-WI) today introduced the Troops to Teachers Improvement Act. This bill would allow 98 percent of schools across the country to become eligible for the Troops to Teachers program, which assists veterans to start second careers as school teachers.

Troops to Teachers is a unique program that provides veterans with a \$5,000 stipend to help cover the costs of teaching certification in exchange for three years service in a high-need school, which was originally defined as receiving grants under part A of Title I of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Since its authorization in 1993, nearly 10,000 troops have participated in the Troops to Teachers program - bringing important math, science, and foreign language expertise to our classrooms. Furthermore, Troops participants fill a critical need among our educators, and currently over one third are ethnic minorities.

Unfortunately, in 2005, the Department of Education restricted the number of school districts in which veterans can fulfill their teaching requirement through this program. Since the implementation of the ruling, potential Troops participants have found the number of schools in which they would be eligible to teach drastically reduced.

The Matsui-Petri bill would expand the number of schools that are allowed to participate in Troops to Teachers. As a result, there would be a 49% increase in the number of schools eligible for the program nationwide; and the bill retains the current criteria for troops to receive an additional bonus of \$5,000 for teaching in a 'high need school'. Schools are deemed 'high need' if: they are in a school district where 10% of students or greater come from families living below the national poverty level; a school where at least 50% of students are eligible for free or

reduced lunch, or have a high percentage of students with disabilities.

“Troops for Teachers would ensure that veterans are able to teach in high-need schools, greatly expand the number of schools eligible for such an effective program, and allow veterans to teach in their home communities,” Congresswoman Matsui said. “This means that in California, over 3,600 more schools can benefit from this program. In my own district of Sacramento, nearly 150 additional schools could participate, and students and schools across the country will benefit as well.”

“The original intention of the program was to increase the pool of available teachers to schools across the country, and to attract veterans with advanced skills and training to the teaching profession,” Representative Petri said.

“At a time when there is an overwhelming need for highly-qualified math and science teachers, expanding the Troops to Teachers program has never been more important. This bill is a crucial step in supporting our veterans and students by restoring the original intent of this program, and giving our nation's veterans the opportunity to serve their country again,” stated Rep. Matsui.

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