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Rep. Matsui Votes in Favor of Food Safety Bill

Legislation Will Help Protect Sacramentans from Food Contaminants

WASHINGTON, DC – Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (D-CA) voted in favor of today of H.R.2749, Food Safety Enhancement Act of 2009 (FSEA), a much needed bill to update food safety laws to better protect American consumers. The legislation passed by the House of Representatives will expand the resources and authority available to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in order to better ensure the safety of the nation's food supply, specifically placing increased resources toward inspection of imported foods.

“Californians have experienced growing concerns in recent months about food supply, and specifically agricultural products,” said Rep. Matsui. “In the Sacramento Valley we are privileged to enjoy locally grown produce, and this legislation is instrumental in helping to prevent food borne illnesses and protect local farmers from detrimental sales losses as a result.”

In passing FSEA, Congress is delivering further protections to ensure the safety of American families. Additionally, the food safety bill will add a new focus on prevention, and require a shared responsibility between FDA and food manufacturers to keep the food supply safe. The bill requires food manufacturers to implement preventive systems to stop outbreaks before they occur. All food facilities will have to conduct hazard analyses, assess potential food safety risks, and develop plans to keep the food supply safe.

Under current law, the FDA is only able to inspect approximately 1 percent of imported food at the border. The FSEA will also require the FDA to inspect high-risk facilities on a regular basis. FSEA reflects sensible changes to our food safety net by providing the FDA better access to the records of food producers and manufacturers – without having to wait for an outbreak of food-borne illness. The bill provides strong, flexible enforcement tools to strengthen penalties imposed on food facilities that fail to comply with safety requirements.

“We often assume that we do not have to worry about a hidden threat contained in our meal. Unfortunately, recent events have shown that the globalization of food markets means we must be increasingly vigilant in protecting ourselves from these threats,” said Rep. Matsui. “As a grandmother, I have known the worry in packing your grandchildren’s peanut butter sandwich for school. We have a right to know where the food we buy comes from and if it is safe. Once enacted, this law will bring the FDA standards into the twenty-first century.”

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