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Rep. Doris Matsui Statement on Radioactive Import Deterrence

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-05) participated in the House Energy and Environment Subcommittee mark-up of H.R. 515, Radioactive Import Deterrence Act of 2009. Representative Matsui’s opening statement, as prepared for delivery, is below:

“I think all of us understand the significance of preserving the importation of U.S. disposal facilities for domestic waste as we continue to examine expanding nuclear power use. At present, federal regulators, including the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), do not possess the authority to prohibit shipping radioactive waste to the United States.

“The bipartisan bill, of which I am an original cosponsor, being considered today would ban the importation of low-level radioactive waste. Specifically, it would respond to a Utah company's plan to import up to 20,000 tons of low-level radioactive waste from Italy's shuttered nuclear power program through the ports of Charleston, South Carolina, or New Orleans.

“After processing in Tennessee, about 1,600 tons would be disposed of in EnergySolutions Inc.'s facility in the western Utah desert. EnergySolutions operates the nation's largest, and only privately owned low-level radioactive waste disposal site. Its request represents the largest amount of low-level radioactive waste the NRC has ever been asked to allow into the United States. The agency also indicated during a recent hearing held by this Subcommittee that there are pending applications – to import waste from Brazil and Mexico – for disposal in Utah as well.

“I commend my colleagues – Congressmen Gordon, Terry and Matheson – for introducing H.R. 515, and for their leadership on the issue of nuclear waste which affects the health, safety, and security of this country.”

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