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**Matsui Calls for Adoption of Low-Income Broadband Plan in Universal Service Reform**  
*Advocates for Subsidies for Urban, Rural Populations Who Are Split By the Digital Divide*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Today, Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-05) participated in the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Communications, Technology and the Internet hearing on the Universal Service Reform Act of 2009, advocating for the inclusion of a low-income broadband plan in any Universal Service Fund (USF) reform plan. Rep. Matsui introduced the Broadband Affordability Act earlier this year, which would direct the FCC to create a program for universal broadband adoption similar to the current USF lifeline assistance program. As a result, we will expand affordable broadband access in urban and rural areas, particularly for low-income households, and help close the digital divide for millions of Americans. Matsui’s opening statement, as prepared for delivery, is below:

“In today’s economy, the internet has become a necessity, not a luxury. Americans need it to obtain emergency information for educational purposes to find low-cost health care options and to seek employment assistance. In fact, about 75 percent of all large U.S. employers now require applicants to apply online, creating a significant disadvantage for those without broadband. We need to not only expand broadband access, but also address the fact that millions of American simply can’t afford to pay \$60 or more a month for broadband.

“A recent Information Technology and Information Foundation (ITIF) study found that 96 percent of Americans have access to broadband services, but less than 65 percent actually subscribe. Other current prominent studies by the Pew Institute and Public Policy Institute of California have strongly suggested that broadband adoption rates are largely associated with income. Lower-income families in urban and rural areas are severely disadvantaged, in large part, by the lack of access to affordable broadband services.

“To help close the digital divide, I’ve introduced the Broadband Affordability Act, which would direct the FCC to create a program for universal broadband adoption, similar to the current USF lifeline assistance program. The bill will ensure that lower-income Americans living in urban, suburban, and rural areas all have access to affordable broadband services.

“In doing so, households which currently possess broadband access options, but have not subscribed because of cost, would no longer be unserved or underserved. It is my hope that any USF Reform legislation helps bridge this nation’s Digital Divide by addressing affordability barriers.”

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