WASHINGTON, DC— Congressman Mel Watt (12th District of North Carolina) issued the following statement regarding Congressman Donald Payne who died on March 6, 2012:

"I am deeply saddened by the death of my friend and colleague Donald Payne. Representative Payne proudly served the 10th Congressional District of New Jersey for 24 years. As the first elected African American member of Congress from New Jersey, Congressman Payne's outstanding accomplishments are far too numerous to list. But his impact on education, world health, AIDS eradication, and world peace and his selfless efforts to address world hunger and bring peace and respect to the people of Africa, Haiti and other struggling parts of the world will be remembered and appreciated by nameless and faceless people for generations to come.

My heartfelt prayers go to his surviving family, staff and constituents."