

WASHINGTON, DC (January 25, 2010) – Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-IL, released the following statement on the need to continue efforts to pass health care reform.

Thank you for carrying on the fight for health care reform. Thanks for not giving up and not giving in.

There are those who want to sound the death knell for health care reform, but you and I are not among them. No one ever said this battle would be easy, and now that the road is a bit bumpier, we simply must be tougher.

Today we stand on the brink of bringing the United States into the 21st century and into the group of countries that has figured out a way to provide affordable health care to its people. We have reached the unprecedented point of having both the House and Senate pass legislation. Many of us believe that the House bill is far superior but we are meeting now to merge the two versions and make critical – and necessary – improvements in the Senate bill.

Those improvements are essential. Insurance reforms like ending exclusions for pre-existing conditions must apply to everyone, but the Senate bill would leave out 180 million people. Affordability is key, but the Senate bill would tax health benefits of working families and fall short of making health care affordable for lower and middle income families. We must close the

Medicare prescription drug “donut hole”, but the Senate bill only shrinks it by \$500. These are all areas where the House and Senate negotiators have made progress in reaching agreements. Now these changes and more must be reflected in the final law.

We are working now on getting assurances that those changes will be made – most likely with a simple majority in the Senate through the “reconciliation process” – so we can send a bill to the President that, while not perfect, will create the foundation that we can continue to build upon.

We can meet our goal but only if we stand firm. There are those who do not want us to use the reconciliation procedures – even though those procedures are part of the existing rules of the game. To them, I ask, why, if George Bush could use reconciliation to give tax breaks to millionaires, we shouldn't use the same process to get affordable health care to millions of Americans? Why isn't a 51-majority vote good enough? Why should we let the minority defeat the will of the majority time and again through the filibuster? The insurance companies and their Republican allies aren't shy about using the filibuster and we cannot be too timid to use every tool we have to win health care?

We can do this, but not without your help in organizing and mobilizing. Thank you so much!