

*WASHINGTON, DC (April 22, 2010) – Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) made the following statement to commemorate Earth Day 2010.*

Madam Speaker, today marks the 40th year in which the United States has set aside a day to reflect upon our responsibility to protect the environment and preserve it for future generations.

In 2007, the scientific community confirmed that the evidence of warming is "unequivocal." The consensus of this finding should not be understated. Global warming is real and human activity is the main cause.

Consider these facts: The ten warmest years on record have all been since 1990. Worldwide, 2005 was the hottest of all. In the United States, 2008 was the warmest year ever. These rising temperatures have been accompanied by many changes. Hurricanes are more severe. Water levels are rising. Droughts are becoming longer. Mountain glaciers are receding around the world.

While these facts are daunting, the good news is that there is still time to enact policies that will curb the harmful impacts of climate change. The House of Representatives took an important step last year, when we passed legislation that will put caps on the amount of greenhouse gases we emit into the air each year. It also facilitates the research and development of renewable energy sources that will not only reduce our dependence on foreign oil, but also create hundreds of thousands of new jobs.

On this Earth Day, I also want to reiterate my commitment to ensuring that Congress fully funds Great Lakes clean-up programs. The Great Lakes are a national treasure and having spent my entire life living in or near Chicago, I have a tremendous connection to the Great Lakes; my home in Evanston is only a few blocks from Lake Michigan.

As anyone who has spent any considerable amount of time in a Great Lake state knows, the Lakes are more than just a group of fresh water lakes – they play a significant part in shaping our way of life, our traditions, and our future. In addition to its sentimental value, the Great Lakes, including Lake Michigan, serve as an important resource, providing 20 percent of all the surface water in the world.

The United States Congress has a vital responsibility to protect the planet ensure that our grandchildren and great grandchildren will have the opportunity to enjoy it as much as we have. Today, I urge all my colleagues to pause to celebrate the planet and do everything that we can to fulfill this important responsibility to our constituents.