

WASHINGTON, DC – (July 30, 2010) Today Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Co-Chair of the Congressional Seniors Task Force, made the following statement in celebration of the 45th anniversary of Medicare and Medicaid.

“On this 45th anniversary of Medicare and Medicaid, we need to recognize just how much these critical programs have changed the American experience for the better.

“Before Medicare, being old meant you were probably uninsured and you simply didn’t get medical services unless you could pay out-of-pocket or your children could afford to pay your bills. Before Medicaid, there was no source of care for low-income children or pregnant women and there was no assistance with long-term care services. Before these programs existed, no help was available for people with disabilities or chronic care needs. The harsh reality was if an insurance company didn’t want to cover you, you were completely and utterly on your own.

“But 45 years ago, when President Lyndon Johnson signed Medicare and Medicaid laws into being, all that changed. Now, Americans have a system of support to ensure that every one of us has the opportunity for good health and has health care in times of sickness.

“Over the years, Medicare and Medicaid have been improved to provide even better and more comprehensive care to more Americans – but our job is not done. We must continue to improve on the foundation set 45 years ago.

“Even as Democrats are celebrating Medicare and Medicaid's birthday and pledging to protect and strengthen them, the Republicans are offering proposals to end Medicare and Medicaid as we know them. Especially in these tough economic times, when health care is more costly than ever, we must protect these much needed and successful programs. We must remain vigilant against those who want to privatize or cut promised benefits.

“Today, as we celebrate the millions of lives that have been improved and saved because of Medicare and Medicaid, we must also ensure these programs are safe, secure and made stronger than ever. I will continue to fight for these essential programs and ensure they are available for generations to come.”