

WASHINGTON, DC (December 17, 2010) -- Today Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) released the following statement on her vote in favor of H.R. 4853, the Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization and Job Creation Act of 2010.

In the days since President Obama put forward his negotiation with Republicans on unemployment insurance, tax cuts and job creation, we have debated the merits and downfalls of this legislation. And after much personal deliberation, I voted last night with the majority of my fellow Democratic House members to pass H.R. 4853, the Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization and Job Creation Act of 2010. While some support my decision, others are undoubtedly disappointed – even angry.

I understand. I am not at all happy about some of the provisions that will become a temporary reality, most notably the egregious estate tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans that were demanded by the Republicans. In fact, I spoke on the House floor last night to encourage members to vote for an amendment that would have set the estate tax provisions in the final legislation at a higher rate with a lower exemption. To my great disappointment, the amendment failed. I am furious that Republicans have held benefits for the middle tax hostage in the name of protecting their only true constituents – the wealthiest Americans.

But for me and for many progressive Democrats, the final decision to vote in favor came down to ensuring that unemployment insurance would continue to be provided during these still-painful economic times. I just could not, in good conscience, vote against providing the 2 million Americans who would have lost this income in December—or the 7 million individuals who would've been denied this financial help over the next year. I could not return to my district and look constituents in the eye and say I voted *against* putting money in the pockets of a hurting middle class. And not only does unemployment insurance help individual and families who are struggling to pay bills and hold onto their homes, it injects another jolt of stimulus into our economy because the folks who receive this money go straight out and they spend it.

Providing unemployment insurance the right thing to do, but it is also the smart thing to do for our economic recovery. At the end of the day – and a long, heated debate – I chose to support our struggling middle class.

Critically, the bill also extends tax credits for working families. It ensures that middle-class and lower-income Americans' taxes won't rise next year by extending the current income tax rates. It continues the American Opportunity Tax Credit, which helps lower- and middle-income families pay for college, and will help 8 million students afford college next year. It also provides a 2% payroll tax cut, which will benefit more than 155 million workers. The legislation also extends the expanded child tax credit and earned income tax credit provisions that were in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the payroll tax cut and the tax credits expanded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (the child tax credit and the earned income tax credits) together would keep more than 2 million Americans above the poverty line and reduce the severity of poverty for 19 million more.

The legislation also includes tax benefits for businesses to help them create jobs and drive down our all-too-high unemployment rate by allowing businesses to expense 100% of their investments in 2011. This provision has the potential to generate more than \$50 billion in additional investment in 2011. And Mark Zandi, an economic advisor to Sen. John McCain, estimates that the overall package will create an estimated 1.6 million jobs next year.

Finally, I am 100 percent certain that all the good elements in this package would have been wholly impossible to pass when House Republicans are in the majority come January. They have shown their cards, and I was not willing to bet on a better opportunity in the next Congress.