

WASHINGTON, DC (January 25, 2011) – Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) issued the following statement after President Obama's State of the Union address.

“President Obama struck just the right tone in his address to the nation. He was optimistic as he set out a strategy for America to ‘Win the future.’ There were some passages in particular that resonated with me as a Progressive.

“The President called on us to create an America that out-innovates, out-educates, and out-builds our global competitors. We will achieve this, he said, through investment – in our children, teachers, clean energy, immigrants, technology, and bedrock programs like Social Security.

“At the same time, the President held up the good that government can do through regulations and protections – from ensuring safe drinking water to safe air and food – and he highlighted the importance of ending tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans. He highlighted the very American value of openness and tolerance, and the full rejection of discrimination as we did when we struck down Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

“These are ideals that work for *all* Americans, and I support them wholeheartedly.”

Progressive Excerpts from President Obama's Speech:

Role of Regulation in Protecting the Public

But I will not hesitate to create or enforce commonsense safeguards to protect the American people. That's what we've done in this country for more than a century. It's why our food is safe to eat, our water is safe to drink, and our air is safe to breathe. It's why we have speed limits and child labor laws. It's why last year, we put in place consumer protections against hidden fees and penalties by credit card companies, and new rules to prevent another financial crisis. And it's why we passed reform that finally prevents the health insurance industry from exploiting patients.

Protecting Social Security

To put us on solid ground, we should also find a bipartisan solution to strengthen Social Security for future generations. And we must do it without putting at risk current retirees, the most vulnerable, or people with disabilities; without slashing benefits for future generations; and without subjecting Americans' guaranteed retirement income to the whims of the stock market.

Taxes for the Wealthy

And if we truly care about our deficit, we simply cannot afford a permanent extension of the tax cuts for the wealthiest 2% of Americans. Before we take money away from our schools, or

scholarships away from our students, we should ask millionaires to give up their tax break.

Tolerance, Repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell

Our troops come from every corner of this country – they are black, white, Latino, Asian and Native American. They are Christian and Hindu, Jewish and Muslim. And, yes, we know that some of them are gay. Starting this year, no American will be forbidden from serving the country they love because of who they love. And with that change, I call on all of our college campuses to open their doors to our military recruiters and the ROTC. It is time to leave behind the divisive battles of the past. It is time to move forward as one nation.

...And as extremists try to inspire acts of violence within our borders, we are responding with the strength of our communities, with respect for the rule of law, and with the conviction that American Muslims are a part of our American family.

Clean Energy

At the California Institute of Technology, they're developing a way to turn sunlight and water into fuel for our cars. At Oak Ridge National Laboratory, they're using supercomputers to get a lot more power out of our nuclear facilities. With more research and incentives, we can break our dependence on oil with biofuels, and become the first country to have 1 million electric vehicles on the road by 2015.

We need to get behind this innovation. And to help pay for it, I'm asking Congress to eliminate the billions in taxpayer dollars we currently give to oil companies. I don't know if you've noticed, but they're doing just fine on their own. So instead of subsidizing yesterday's energy, let's invest in tomorrow's.

Now, clean energy breakthroughs will only translate into clean energy jobs if businesses know there will be a market for what they're selling. So tonight, I challenge you to join me in setting a new goal: by 2035, 80% of America's electricity will come from clean energy sources. Some folks want wind and solar. Others want nuclear, clean coal, and natural gas. To meet this goal, we will need them all – and I urge Democrats and Republicans to work together to make it happen.

Teachers

Let's also remember that after parents, the biggest impact on a child's success comes from the man or woman at the front of the classroom. In South Korea, teachers are known as "nation builders." Here in America, it's time we treated the people who educate our children with the same level of respect. We want to reward good teachers and stop making excuses for bad ones. And over the next ten years, with so many Baby Boomers retiring from our classrooms, we want to prepare 100,000 new teachers in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math.

In fact, to every young person listening tonight who's contemplating their career choice: If you want to make a difference in the life of our nation; if you want to make a difference in the life of a child – become a teacher. Your country needs you.

Dream Act

One last point about education. Today, there are hundreds of thousands of students excelling in our schools who are not American citizens. Some are the children of undocumented workers, who had nothing to do with the actions of their parents. They grew up as Americans and pledge allegiance to our flag, and yet live every day with the threat of deportation. Others come here from abroad to study in our colleges and universities. But as soon as they obtain advanced degrees, we send them back home to compete against us. It makes no sense.

Now, I strongly believe that we should take on, once and for all, the issue of illegal immigration. I am prepared to work with Republicans and Democrats to protect our borders, enforce our laws and address the millions of undocumented workers who are now living in the shadows. I know that debate will be difficult and take time. But tonight, let's agree to make that effort. And let's stop expelling talented, responsible young people who can staff our research labs, start new businesses, and further enrich this nation.

Infrastructure Funding

Over the last two years, we have begun rebuilding for the 21st century, a project that has meant thousands of good jobs for the hard-hit construction industry. Tonight, I'm proposing that we redouble these efforts.

We will put more Americans to work repairing crumbling roads and bridges. We will make sure this is fully paid for, attract private investment, and pick projects based on what's best for the economy, not politicians.

Within 25 years, our goal is to give 80% of Americans access to high-speed rail, which could allow you go places in half the time it takes to travel by car. For some trips, it will be faster than flying – without the pat-down. As we speak, routes in California and the Midwest are already underway.

Internet Access for All

Within the next five years, we will make it possible for business to deploy the next generation of high-speed wireless coverage to 98% of all Americans. This isn't just about a faster internet and fewer dropped calls. It's about connecting every part of America to the digital age. It's about a rural community in Iowa or Alabama where farmers and small business owners will be able to sell their products all over the world. It's about a firefighter who can download the design of a burning building onto a handheld device; a student who can take classes with a digital textbook; or a patient who can have face-to-face video chats with her doctor.