Chicago, IL (February 24, 2012) -Today U.S. Representatives Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and Mike Quigley (D-IL) joined women's health advocates and religious groups to speak out for women's access to contraception and in support of a final rule issued by the Department of Health and Human Services on preventive health services.

On February 10, the Obama Administration announced a final rule requiring employers to provide insurance coverage for the full range of FDA-approved contraceptives without charging a co-pay, co-insurance, or a deductible. The rule exempts 335,000 churches, mosques and synagogues. The policy also ensures that if a woman works for a religious-affiliated employer such as a hospital or university with objections to providing contraceptive services, the woman's insurance company will be required to directly offer her contraceptive care free of charge.

Speakers in support of the policy at the event held at First United Methodist Church at the Chicago Temple included Carol Brite of Planned Parenthood of Illinois, Rev. Larry Greenfield of Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, Dr. Tara Kumaraswami of Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health, Lorie Chaiten, Director of ACLU of Illinois Reproductive Rights Project, and Sara Hutchinson, Domestic Program Director of Catholics for Choice.

"It is inconceivable to me – in the year 2012 –that there should be any controversy about access to contraception," said **Rep. Jan Schakowsky.** "The use of birth control and its medical benefits have been widely supported by medical experts and scientific experts. Moreover, 99 percent of American women (including 98 percent of Catholic women) use birth control at some point in their lives – for preventive health, for family planning, and as a matter of individual choice. No employer should decide for a woman whether she can access the health care services that she and her doctor decide are necessary. I applaud President Obama's effort to protect women's access to important preventive services despite partisan attacks from Republicans who wish to create a manufactured controversy of religious freedom and silence the voices of women on this issue."

"Make no mistake, there is a war on women, and we have to fight back," said **Rep. Mike Quigley** . "Last week, I walked out of a Congressional hearing on birth control without a single woman on the witness panel. Hours later, I turned on the TV to hear someone suggest contraception was as simple as women putting aspirin between their knees. These horrifying attacks on birth control are only the most recent in a larger series of attacks on women's health. We've seen choice opponents attempt to cut family planning funding, prevent a hospital from saving a woman's life on moral grounds, and even redefine rape. Enough is enough."

Last year, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) released a report recommending coverage of contraception services, supplies, education and counseling – without cost-sharing requirements. The recommendations were based on scientific research that showed the important health impacts of planning a pregnancy and proper birth spacing on both a woman and her children. The ability to determine the timing of a pregnancy can prevent a range of pregnancy

complications, including gestational diabetes, high blood pressure, and placental problems, among others. In addition, a planned pregnancy allows a woman to take steps so she is sufficiently healthy to undergo pregnancy and childbirth.

###

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rep. Jan Schakowsky, Adjoa Adofo, (202) 225-2111

Rep. Mike Quigley, Aviva Bowen, (773) 267-5926