

Washington, D.C. (July 30, 2012) – Rep. Jan Schakowsky released the following statement today in recognition of the 47th anniversary of the creation of Medicare and Medicaid and in response to a report released by the Alliance for Retired Americans, Social Security Works, and the Strengthen Social Security Coalition for their work and for this important study on the importance of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid to the people of Illinois:

“Forty-seven years ago today, Medicare and Medicaid were signed into law. In two weeks, we will celebrate the 77th anniversary of Social Security. These celebrations come at a time when their critical importance is especially evident. Social Security benefits may be modest – an average \$13,541 in Illinois – but they are guaranteed – unlike retirement savings lost in the Great Recession. Before Medicare, half of all seniors were uninsured. Today, nearly all seniors and 9 million people with disabilities receive guaranteed benefits without pre-existing condition exclusions. Many parents who lost their jobs also lost their employment-based health insurance – and Medicaid helped ensure their children didn’t lose medical care.

But we celebrate at a time when Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid – and the essential benefits they provide – have never been at greater risk. It would seem unbelievable – if we didn’t have the proof before our eyes. This year, the House Republican majority passed a budget that would end Medicare as we know it – turning senior citizens and people with disabilities over to the very private insurance companies who wouldn’t insure them in the first place and doubling out-of-pocket costs. Medicaid would be cut by \$810 billion over 10 years. It would be turned into a block grant – blocking access to health and long-term care services to millions of Americans.

I served on the Bowles-Simpson Commission. The co-chairs’ proposal would cut Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid benefits – while capping the top tax rate at 29% -- or lower. Their proposals have somehow gotten an aura of respectability – but they are not fair –nor is it courageous to cut health care to children and the disabled or cut Social Security benefits to seniors and seniors.

The report being released today gives us all the evidence we need to fight these cruel cuts. The title says it all – “Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid Work for Illinois.” As a member of Congress, I know their importance to my constituents. There is not a day that goes by when someone doesn’t tell me how much they rely on Social Security’s guarantee or that they are hanging on waiting to be old enough to get Medicare’s guaranteed benefits. When the Republicans threatened to shut the government down over the debt ceiling – threatened Social

Security benefits – I got calls – many from older women – sobbing at the thought that their one source of income – the Social Security check they earned over their lifetime – wouldn't arrive. This report tells us about real people like my constituents – but it also gives us facts and figures.

Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid serve millions of Illinoisans – 1 out of every 6 people in my state receive Social Security benefits, 1 in 7 have that invaluable Medicare card, and 1 in 5 get their health and long-term care services through Medicaid. Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid are intergenerational treasures. In Illinois, over 160,000 children – including my own grandchildren – receive benefits directly. Over 318,000 live with their grandparents, who are likely to rely on Social Security and Medicare. And nearly 1 in 2 children in Illinois receive their medical care because of Medicaid.

Not only do Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid work for individuals and families – they also work for the entire community. Social Security benefit dollars – equal to 4.3% of the Illinois GDP in 2010 – are spent in the community. Health care providers not only treat patients – they hire workers and buy supplies from bandages to food. In many communities, hospitals are the largest employer.

Today's report is clear and detailed in describing the importance of Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security to the people and economy of Illinois. And it is persuasive in letting us know that cuts to benefits would be devastating. I will work to make sure that we are able to celebrate these national treasures for generations to come.”

Please see attached report

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