

(WASHINGTON) – Congressman Allen West (R-FL) released this statement today after joining 224 Republicans and 10 Democrats of the House of Representatives in support of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act:

"Today I joined a bipartisan coalition of Members of the House of Representatives, putting Americans before politics and voting in favor of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act.

I support this legislation because both the extension of the payroll tax holiday and the extension of unemployment insurance program are paid for. Further, the legislation protects the social security program for both today and future retirees. This, however, must be the last time we take this course of action.

The legislation also prevents a reduction of physician reimbursement from the Medicare program. These reimbursements are essential to the doctors who provide medical services to the seniors who reside in South Florida and throughout the United States.

The bill also requires President Barack Obama to issue a permit for the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline. The pipeline will create thousands of needed jobs as well as assist our nation work towards energy independence.

However, I am disappointed in the House Leadership who again waited until the 11th hour to take care of the business of the citizens of this nation even though we have known about these issues all year. I am also disappointed that this legislation only provides a band aid to a long-term national problem. As Members of the United States Congress, we have a duty to lead from the front – especially on the toughest of issues.

The American people are tired of last minute 'Christmas Tree' legislation. However, when you have a disconnected United States Senate and an absence of leadership from the White House, the House of Representatives finds itself in this same scenario over and over again this Congress.

Those who voted against this piece of legislation seek to offer the American people short-term candy which is long-term poison. It should be noted that this bill includes twelve provisions that President Obama, himself, supports. The pertinent question is--Are the Democrats serious about setting the conditions for job growth in America or do they just want victims and economic slaves?

\*The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act does the following:

- Extends the 2 percent reduction on the employee side of the Social Security payroll for one year from 6.2% to 4.2% for one year;
- Lowers the self-employment tax by 2 percentage points for one year. Self-employed Americans have to pay both the employee and employer payroll tax;
- Extends and reforms the temporary expansion of the unemployment compensation program for one year. Reforms include capping unemployment benefits from 99 weeks to 59 weeks; requires recipients to actively search for work, enroll in a GED program if they do not have a high school degree, and participate in training programs; and allows states to test unemployment insurance participants for drug use;
- Requires the President to issue a permit for the Keystone XL pipeline project within 60 days of enactment. The Keystone XL pipeline project is estimated to create over 20,000 jobs in the United States;
- Provides Regulatory Relief to require the EPA to issue rulings to replace four recently published, interrelated EPA rules setting Maximum Achievable Control Technology (MACT) to block the implementation of four EPA proposed regulations on industrial boilers, process heaters, and incinerators
- Extends the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program through September

30, 2012;

- Prevents a 27.4% physician reimbursement cut scheduled to take effect on January 1, 2012, and instead provides a 1% increase in reimbursement levels in 2012 and another 1% increase in 2013. This is the Physician Payment Update, or so-called "Doc Fix;"
- Provides a one-year extension through December 31, 2012, of increased Medicare payments for urban ground ambulance services (2% increase), rural ground ambulance services (3% increase), as well as for "super-rural" areas as calculated by the HHS Secretary;
- Extends the Medicare therapy caps exceptions process for two years through December 31, 2013. Under current law, Medicare Part B outpatient physical and speech language therapy services have a combined cap of \$1,880 per year;
- Extends for one year through the Qualified Individual (QI) program – the federal reimbursement program to states that assists certain low-income dual eligible individuals with their Medicare Part B premiums;
- Reauthorizes and reforms the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) through September 30, 2016;
- Prohibits millionaires from receiving food stamp benefits and unemployment insurance; and
- Extends the pay freeze on federal workers through 2013.

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