

(January 28, 2009) Rep. Lipinski Votes to Move Economic Stimulus Bill Forward

Lipinski: We Improved Bill, But Further Revision Needed

[Washington, D.C.] Today, Congressman Dan Lipinski released the following statement as the House of Representatives passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

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"Like all Americans, I am deeply concerned about the state of our economy, and realize that the most pressing issue for our nation is getting our economy moving again so we can put people back to work, stabilize the housing market, and foster sustainable economic growth.

"Instead of a faulty Wall Street bailout, we need a stimulus bill that will put people back to work, especially to fix our transportation infrastructure. Although H.R. 1, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, is not the stimulus bill that I would have written, I decided to vote for this legislation at this first step in the process because we have succeeded in making some improvements to the bill and I believe that we should keep the process moving forward to help to get people back to work. During the process in the House I have been a leader in the push to improve this bill - especially in adding more transportation money, improving some of the Buy American language, and getting some wasteful spending eliminated - and as this bill goes to the Senate and then to a House-Senate conference I will continue to fight to make this a better bill for my constituents and for the nation. We need to do this right. If the final bill does not improve, I will not support it.

"I applaud President Barack Obama for understanding the need for immediate, decisive action to revive our economy, but I still have many reservations about this bill.

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"First and foremost, it does not invest enough in transportation. Transportation infrastructure spending is one of the best

ways to put people back to work immediately, to build the foundation for future prosperity, and to create jobs here in America. In fact, for every \$1 billion spent on infrastructure, up to 47,000 jobs will be created. But out of the \$825 billion worth of spending contained in this legislation only about 5% goes toward the rail, aviation, road, and mass transit projects that should serve as the core of this package, and could really help end this recession. We have an opportunity before us to address an enormous need for infrastructure maintenance and to create jobs at the same time. But H.R. 1 only begins to address our nation's urgent infrastructure problems.

"I am proud to have improved the Recovery Act through an amendment that will increase funding for vital mass transit programs by \$3 billion --- \$1.5 billion for Transit Capital Assistance and \$1.5 billion for New Starts. This additional funding will create and support hundreds of thousands of good paying American jobs, and in these difficult economic times, creating more American jobs should be the principal function of this legislation.

"Not only will my amendment create good-paying jobs, but it will help meet urgent needs in mass transit systems nationwide, helping them accommodate the recent rise in ridership and providing widespread environmental benefits. Specifically, this amendment would increase Transit Capital Grants for Illinois from \$540 million to an estimated \$640 million. This is money that will be put to use immediately creating jobs, increasing access to transit in Illinois, and providing environmental benefits throughout Chicagoland.

"Unfortunately, the real need for funding in Chicagoland and all across the country is much more, and investment in transit - and more broadly in transportation and infrastructure - continues to be shortchanged in this bill.

"I have also led Congress in pushing for a strong "Buy American" provision in the stimulus package. One of the best ways make sure that H. R. 1 really creates jobs is to spend it here at home. But unfortunately the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act does not require that we spend \$825 billion in American taxpayer dollars on American-made concrete, smart meters, and software. There is not enough in the bill to guarantee that it will create American jobs in America instead of Chinese jobs in China.

"Over 50 of my colleagues joined me in a letter calling for a Buy American provision the stimulus. While I was denied a floor vote on my comprehensive amendment, my efforts led to the inclusion of provisions requiring the purchase of American-made textiles and the use of American steel and iron in all public buildings and public works projects. Although the bill is substantially improved, it still does not go far enough, and I will continue to fight for a stronger Buy American provision in the final version of the bill.

"Throughout the economic crisis I have stood by the American taxpayer and consistently voted against the wasteful government spending of taxpayer funds. To that end, I am one of only a handful of Congressmen who voted against the \$700 billion Wall Street Bailout. My judgment in voting against the bailout has unfortunately been proven correct. That bailout has done nothing to thaw credit markets, help small businesses, or stop the recession from getting worse.

"I have been working to improve the Recovery Act to make sure that this \$825 billion in taxpayer dollars are spent wisely. For example, we were successful in eliminating almost \$200 million that would have been wastefully spent improving the National Mall.

"I will continue to be a leader in efforts to revise and improve the bill, and I will not support the final bill unless it is substantially improved. We cannot fiddle while this recession gets worse, but we neither can we rush almost \$1 trillion in spending if the spending will not create good-paying American jobs."