

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Rep. Henry A. Waxman, Ranking Member**

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### **Rep. Waxman Statement on the Conference Committee Report**

**WASHINGTON, DC** – Ranking Member Henry A. Waxman released the following statement on the payroll tax relief conference committee report:

“I will support this conference report – but with reservations. We could and should have done better in meeting our responsibilities to the American people. Nevertheless, I commend the members of this conference for the positive things they achieved.

“First and foremost, we are doing a lot of good for families and our economy in this legislation. We are extending the payroll tax reduction for millions of families, helping them in a difficult economic time and providing much-needed stimulus to our economy.

“We are extending unemployment insurance, which is a lifeline to those out of work.

“We are ensuring that doctors serving seniors will be paid for their services through the end of the year.

“And we are making spectrum available for new innovations in wireless coverage, which will be an engine for economic growth.

“While these are the provisions I support in this conference report, there are also significant missed opportunities and poor choices that affect federal workers and preventive health programs.

“Nowhere is the lost opportunity more apparent than in our failure to end the Medicare physician payment formula known as the SGR and set us on a path to a fair and reasonable physician reimbursement system. Having to settle for another temporary solution, which leaves us at the end of the year even deeper in the hole in terms of a

permanent solution, is a real failure, and one that fails Medicare beneficiaries and doctors alike.

“We had the opportunity to use the war savings from Iraq and Afghanistan to pay for this solution. The Republicans said no. At the minimum, we should have used these savings to pay for the debt caused by previous short-term temporary fixes. The Republican leadership refused to allow that to happen.

“As a result, we are, once again, forced to accept a short-term ‘solution’ that simply stops an immediate crisis, but ensures that physicians in Medicare face another emergency a year from now. This is a poor result.

“It is not right to ask Medicare beneficiaries to bear the cost of the failure of an arbitrary formula written into the law in 1997. It is not right to ask other providers, particularly safety-net providers serving a disproportionate share of low income seniors and individuals with disabilities, to take cuts in their payments for the same reason. And it certainly is not right to reduce our commitment to prevention by robbing the prevention fund of critical dollars that could help us keep people healthy instead of paying for them when they are sick.

“I am also deeply concerned about the federal employee provisions. It is simply unfair to ask working Americans who happen to serve the taxpayers through their work for the government to pay for half the costs of continuing unemployment benefits for the entire nation. This denigrates public service, and it is unworthy of us to impose such an involuntary sacrifice on them. Moreover, it is a bad precedent to be paying for this emergency economic relief at all. We have not done so previously, and I am sorry we are doing it in this legislation.

“While I have serious reservations about these provisions, I have none recommending that the conference adopt the spectrum provisions in the conference report. These negotiations have resulted in legislation that will make new spectrum available for smartphones and tablets, will create a nationwide band of spectrum that can be used for Super WiFi and other unlicensed uses, and will fund the build-out of an interoperable broadband network for first responders. Establishing the public safety network allows us to complete the major piece of unfinished business from the attacks of 9/11. These

provisions will promote innovation and economic growth while contributing \$15 billion to pay for this legislation.

“These spectrum provisions are the result of many members' work. Two Senators not on the conference made an enormous contribution, Senator Rockefeller, the chair of the Senate Commerce Committee, and Senate Majority Leader Reid, and I thank them for their leadership. On the conference, Senator Kyl and Chairmen Upton and Walden deserve great credit for their work in crafting this pro-growth, pro-innovation compromise.

“Taken as a whole, I believe we should support this package, even with its serious shortcomings. It is not what any of us would have written. This is indeed a compromise.

“But the alternative would be worse. Failure to pass this package would let the middle class tax cut lapse and undermine our economic recovery, cause the unemployed to lose their benefits, and slash physician payments in Medicare so that our seniors and disabled lose access to their doctors. It would also mean a halt to progress in developing the wireless superhighways of the future and ensuring we have an emergency broadband network in place to respond to terrorism and urgent events.

“That is why I support this conference report and will ask my colleagues to do likewise.”

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