

(Washington, D.C.) – Late on Tuesday evening, U.S. Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) voted reluctantly in favor of H.R. 8, the bill to avert the so-called “fiscal cliff.” Below is his statement to the U.S. House of Representatives regarding his vote.

“As the Congress lurches from self-imposed crisis to self-imposed crisis, it is easy to understand why members of the public shake their heads in disgust at the inability of the government to do the important work of America to help Americans.

“The negotiators of this deal should never have agreed to bargain under a hostage-taking deadline. Of course, for long-term economic stability and growth, we must have greater balance between revenue and expenditures. That means Congress should pay close attention day to day, month to month, to revenue and to spending and should bring them more into line. That should always be true, though, not just whenever someone says there is a crisis.

“And say what you will, there is no good reason for a crisis now. The deadline is artificial. This ‘fiscal cliff’ is the result of a deal agreed to in August 2011 when some congressional members who dislike government tried to prevent the U.S. from paying our debts, and the White House and Congressional leaders allowed them to hold the government hostage and then to impose automatic spending cuts and tax increases in the most thoughtless, ham-handed way. And the negotiators should never have negotiated with hostage-takers – or, after the debt ceiling confrontation was past, should never have let the hostage-takers' demands live on.

“As I see it, the big problem with the fiscal package before us today is that it was debated and negotiated on the terms set by the hostage-takers in 2011. Instead of talking about what our government needs to do put people to work; to reduce unemployment; to educate Americans; to rebuild our roads and bridges; to stimulate vibrant and innovative industry; to tend to the nourishment, the housing, the cultural well-being of all Americans – and then doing those things – Congress and Administration have spent several months neglecting all the important work in front of us: drought relief, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Violence Against Women Act, bridge repair, better transportation, better communication, reliable mail delivery, etc. etc. Instead they have focused on such things as whether the marginal tax rate should be 36 percent or 39.6 percent for income earned above \$250,000 or \$450,000.

“Why should the President, why should the Democratic leadership in Congress, have agreed to negotiate with hostage takers under contrived, media-fueled deadlines? Why should the President, why should the Democratic leadership in Congress, have accepted the inane

premise of the Tea Party and the Peterson Institute that our nation is defined by its debt and that we are in effect a poor, debtor nation and that the government is helpless in the face of that debt? There is no good answer to a bad question.

“The premise of the deal before us is false, and the Democratic negotiators have been trying hard to find a good outcome based on that false premise. In fact, we do have a long-term problem with the debt. We should work to correct it, but also we should recognize that it is long-term.

“Meanwhile we have some immediate problems: stubborn unemployment, a sluggish economy, crumbling infrastructure, and millions of Americans in need of housing and food. We should not allow our concern for the debt to paralyze our government and thus prevent action on the immediate, critical problems affecting our people in the here and now. The blatant, sad irony is that dealing aggressively with those immediate problems – the very problems whose solutions are being pushed aside by the artificial, self-imposed debt crisis – also would be the best way of dealing with the long-term debt problem. It would be the best way of generating the economic activity and growth necessary to put our people back to work and our debt in its place.

“This deal was done wrong. The postponed crisis will reappear with the debt crisis and sequestration and tax increases in March, and the President will be in a weaker, not stronger, position to deal with the crisis then. However, I do not want to make the situation worse by weakening the President's hand and weakening the economy by allowing the government, so to speak, to ‘fall off the cliff,’ so with great reluctance I will support this bill.”