Congressional offices only distribute tickets to the swearing in ceremony.

As the end-of-year deadline to address key issues affecting our economy approaches, the American people demand we take decisive action to avoid the so called “fiscal cliff.” Strengthening our economy and getting our nation back on track will require tough choices, but one thing is clear – the path to fiscal sustainability must not be made on the backs of our nation’s most vulnerable communities. That is my position on behalf of the constituents I represent and as Chair-elect of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC).

President Obama and Congressional leaders continue to negotiate ways to avoid the “fiscal cliff.” Before considering its support of any final agreement, the CBC adopted a set of principles which must be included:

$1.5 trillion in cuts have already been agreed upon through the spending caps in the Budget Control Act of 2011 and should be considered in any agreement.

Allowing the Bush-era tax cuts to expire for the wealthiest Americans must be a part of any agreement and our overall path to fiscal solvency.

Social Security does not contribute to our deficit and should be completely off the negotiating table. Additionally, the CBC will oppose any plan that changes the eligibility for Medicare or cuts benefits to Medicaid beneficiaries.

The CBC supports extending the middle-class Bush-era tax cuts, but we must be sure that they will not be paid for by later cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid benefits.

The Affordable Care Act should be fully implemented. The program does not add to the debt and must be protected from further cuts. Millions of Americans are already benefiting from health care reform and millions of Americans stand to gain access to affordable health insurance in 2014.

Emergency unemployment insurance must be extended. Every dollar spent on unemployment insurance generates $1.55 in economic activity. Two million workers are in danger of losing their emergency unemployment compensation if no action is taken by the end of the year. It is also critical that we protect the other tax credits that assist working families.

The CBC recognizes that we have saved tens of billions of dollars from reducing waste, fraud, and abuse in the Department of Defense, and there remains potential for additional and significant cost savings with further improvements to oversight and management.

We must not ignore the ongoing jobs crisis. As we reduce deficits and debt, we must be sure to avoid premature austerity that could stall the recovery and must consider extending current policies and enacting new ones that create jobs and grow the economy.

The Congress has other unfinished business to resolve before we ring in the New Year. I continue to work for passage of the bill I introduced with Congressman LaTourette to establish investment bonds that will fund demolition needs for cities throughout the nation, including Cleveland and other communities in my district. I stand in support of reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act. I hope my colleagues in the House who stood in the way of approving the Senate version of this bill earlier in the year will come to their senses and vote to protect all potential victims of domestic violence.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT INAUGURATION TICKETS

Friday, December 14, 2012 is the deadline to request tickets to the Presidential Inauguration. The limit is two tickets per caller. You may contact my district office at 216-522-4900 and ask for Margaret McLaughlin. Be prepared to submit the names of both people in your request. Please use the name, address, telephone number and email as they appear on your voter registration where applicable. Tickets will be distributed via a lottery. If selected, tickets must be picked up in Washington, D.C. on Saturday, January 19th or Sunday, January 20, 2013 prior to the President's swearing in on Monday, January 21, 2013.

Congressional offices only distribute tickets to the swearing in ceremony. We do not control access to the inaugural balls. Requests to participate in the official Inaugural Day parade or to provide entertainment at all balls, galas, receptions or parties is determined by the Joint Task Force – National Capital Region (JTF-NCR). Online applications to participate in the parade are now closed. Please go to the Inauguration Information link on my website www.fudge.house.gov for the most current updates.