



JOAN McCARTHY LASONDE FOR CONGRESS

460 Winnetka Ave. — Suite 1
Winnetka, IL 60093
(847) 430-4590
www.joanforcongress.com

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LASONDE: SCHAKOWSKY'S SILENCE ON CUBA SPEAKS VOLUMES

WINNETKA, Illinois — Joan McCarthy Lasonde, Republican candidate for Congress in Illinois' Ninth Congressional District, made the following statement regarding Rep. Jan Schakowsky's actions this month, including Schakowsky's decision not to speak out on the Cuban government's human rights abuses.

"How ineffective, partisan, and out of step with the Ninth District is Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky? Look no further than her actions this month.

"Ms. Schakowsky returned from a groundbreaking state trip to Cuba with President Obama without uttering a word of encouragement for dissidents seeking reform in what remains a repressive dictatorship. This trip was a perfect opportunity to press the Cuban regime for much-needed reforms to bring basic human rights. As Vice Chair of Congress's Human Rights Commission, which maintains a list of political prisoners in Cuba, Ms. Schakowsky should have added a concrete, authoritative voice. Instead, she sealed her lips.

"I urge Ms. Schakowsky to call on Raul Castro to bring human rights reforms concurrently with trade normalization. I support normalization with Cuba, but this visit and normalization can only be viewed as successful if they result in improving the lives of the Cuban people.

"Throughout her career, Ms. Schakowsky has repeatedly insulted those with whom she should be working constructively, using exceptionally harsh actions and words. In stark contrast to her silence on Cuba, she led the boycott of Israeli President Netanyahu's speech before Congress.

"Earlier this month, she led demonstrations at a Republican dinner event in Chicago, labeling attendees haters and racists. I was there, as was most of the Republican Congressional delegation from Illinois, with which she is expected to work. Our focus was on how best to help our constituents. There was no hatred or racism.

"Ms. Schakowsky is perpetually fueled by rage — rage that is poorly directed, which in turn fuels Washington's rampant, partisan gridlock. Upon returning from Cuba, she took to Twitter with six inflammatory messages about the Little Sisters of the Poor, who, she says, are 'using religion as a shield to discriminate against their employees.' In contrast, her response to last week's Brussels bombings was silence. Her response to the November Paris bombings was little more than a call for gun control.

"In speaking with the people of the Ninth District, even those who differ with me ideologically, I consistently find we all share values. To be sure, when I'm in Washington there will be moments of frustration with gridlock and partisanship. But rather than let my frustration turn to rage, my energy will be constructively directed towards solutions on those matters we all share an interest in — expanding opportunity for America's poor and middle class, fighting the heroin epidemic, and resolving genuine threats to our security — rather than towards those who don't share my views. The next Congress must be different than it has been. Both parties share blame for its failures. Ms. Schakowsky is part of that failure.

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