

**April 30, 2009**

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) -- As more and more Americans are hit with sudden interest rate increases on their credit cards, U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-04) today voted for the Credit Cardholders' Bill of Rights (H.R. 627). This legislation will provide increased protections against unfair, deceptive and anti-competitive credit card practices which have made it increasingly difficult for cardholders to pay off their monthly balances. The bill passed by a vote of 357-70.

**“Many American families are struggling to regain their financial footing as credit card companies rapidly raise their interest rates and slam consumers with hidden fees,” Altmire said. “The Credit Cardholders’ Bill of Rights will end several deceptive and unfair practices so that Americans can pay down their credit card balances and increase their financial stability. Protecting consumers and giving American families the tools they need to improve their financial standing is a crucial component of our continuing efforts to get America’s economy back on track.”**

The Credit Cardholders' Bill of Rights will protect American consumers by enacting a number of much-needed reforms. These reforms include preventing unfair and arbitrary interest rate increases; requiring card companies to give 45 days notice of all interest rate increases so consumers can pay off their balance and get a better deal; ending “double cycle” billing, to ensure card companies are not charging interest on debt you paid on time; empowering consumers to set their own credit limits; protecting cardholders from due date gimmicks; and prohibiting companies from imposing excessive fees.

More than three-quarters of American families have credit cards and close of half of these families carry a balance. One-fifth of all Americans with credit card debt pay an interest rate above 20 percent. According to the Federal Reserve, the average amount of credit card debt among families carrying a balance was \$7,300 in 2007.