

October 25, 2006

RECORD NUMBER OF AMERICANS CONCERNED ABOUT HIGH HEALTH COSTS

SCHAKOWSKY CALLS FOR GUARANTEED, AFFORDABLE COVERAGE

WASHINGTON, DC - Today, Rep. Jan Schakowsky called on Congress and the Bush Administration to respond to more evidence of growing consumer dissatisfaction with health care costs by enacting legislation to provide guaranteed, affordable health care for all.

Rep. Schakowsky made her comments in response to the release of the 2006 Health Confidence Survey by the nonpartisan Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI). The EBRI survey found that high health care costs are the main reason that nearly 1 in 3 Americans give U.S. health care a "poor" rating - twice the percentage since the survey was begun in 1998. The survey results can be found at http://www.house.gov/htbin/leave_site?In_url=http://www.ebri.org/

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Other key findings of the EBRI survey are:

52% of Americans are dissatisfied with the cost of health insurance, a record percentage in the survey's history

48% were dissatisfied with the costs left uncovered by insurance

31% rated the health care system as poor and 28% rated it fair

36% of insured Americans have decreased retirement savings to pay for health care and 53% took money from other savings

28% of insured Americans had difficulty paying for basic necessities

Rep. Schakowsky's statement follows:

Today's report from the Employee Benefit Research Institute is just one more wakeup call to the Bush Administration and Congress that something must be done about rising health care costs. When a family health insurance policy costs more than a full-time minimum wage worker earns in a year and when insured Americans are declaring bankruptcy because of high medical bills, lowering health care costs should be at the top of our national agenda.

The EBRI findings that Americans are rapidly losing confidence in our health care system should come as no surprise to anyone. Every day in Illinois and across America, families sit at their kitchen table trying to figure out how they can afford the medical services they need. Increasingly, their answer is that they cannot.

More than four out of every 10 Americans (44%) have delayed going to the doctor and more than 1 in 3 (36%) have not filled a prescription because of high costs. Not getting preventive care results in preventable but costly illnesses down the road, and delaying early treatment for serious problems can be fatal.

Even Americans who have insurance are struggling with high costs and going without needed care. Many Americans who want to put away money for retirement or their children's education cannot because they are using their savings to pay for health care costs.

American families deserve real solutions - not insurance policies with multi-thousand dollar deductibles or bare-bones benefits. It is time for guaranteed, affordable health care for all.