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SCHAKOWSKY: BUSH HEALTH CARE BUDGET DJ VU ALL OVER AGAIN

BUDGET CUTS MEDICARE AND MEDICAID, LEAVES AMERICANS ON THEIR OWN

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky, a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, today released the below statement following a hearing on President Bush's FY07 health care budget:

As I look at the budget that President Bush just sent us, I have an overwhelming sense of what Yogi Berra described as "dj vu all over again."

Once again, we are being asked to cut Medicaid and Medicare. Once again, we are being asked to support Association Health Plans and Health Savings Accounts that shift costs to individuals and families, making them pay more and get less. And once again, we are being told that you and the President had to make tough choices given fewer resources. In your testimony today [Secretary Leavitt], you are going to tell us that "cutting a program does not imply an absence of compassion."

This is a budget that is undeniably lacking in compassion and I believe it is indefensible. You are correct that budgets are about values and choices but this Administration has made the wrong decisions time and time again. How can we tell the American public that this nation - the greatest nation in the history of the world - can afford to spend \$133 million a day in Iraq but has to cut funding for hospice care and services for the mentally ill? How can we tell the American public that we need to extend and increase tax cuts for the already-wealthy who do not need them while freezing medical research and eliminating state programs to help the uninsured?

But this year we are dealing with two new catastrophes: one, the new Part D drug benefit and two, Hurricane Katrina. I believe that the Bush Administration has failed the American public on both counts - in the first by acting to put insurance and drug industry interests ahead of the needs of senior citizens and disabled people. In the second by failing to show the leadership needed to rebuild a vibrant health care infrastructure in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast.

Americans deserve better. I hope that we reject this budget and enact priorities that will reflect public needs and strengthen the health and well-being of our nation.