

OCTOBER 25, 2005

SCHAKOWSKY SPEAKS OUT IN SUPPORT OF RED RIBBON WEEK

WASHINGTON, DC - Representative Schakowsky today spoke in favor of House Resolution 485, supporting the goals of Red Ribbon Week, on the floor of the House of Representatives. Red Ribbon Week, now in its 20th year, is a national educational campaign promoting drug free communities.

Representative Schakowsky's full floor statement is below:

The original and most fundamental purpose of Red Ribbon Week is to honor the memory of Enrique "Kiki" Camarena, a Drug Enforcement Administration agent who was brutally murdered by drug traffickers in 1985.

Now in its 20th year, Red Ribbon Week has grown into a national campaign to promote drug free communities by raising awareness, particularly among our children, of the perils of drug use. During this week community, school, and home-based programs will convey important drug use information to millions of our fellow citizens, particularly the most vulnerable among us, our children.

Red Ribbon Week aims to prevent drug use. Red Ribbon Week is a useful part of what we all acknowledge is a constant challenge in young lives. In support of Red Ribbon Week, I marched with students in Norridge and Harwood Heights raising awareness and building support for drug free communities.

Notwithstanding the many laudable aspects of Red Ribbon Week, it is clear that we still have a lot of work to do. The most recent National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) tells us that almost eight percent of the population over the age of 12 are current users of illicit drugs. The current use of illicit drugs is even more prevalent among teens, almost eleven percent. While marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug, methamphetamine use is spreading across the country at alarming rates.

The NSDUH report also notes significant use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and legal drugs such as pain relievers and tranquilizers. Again, young people in their late teens and early twenties have use rates in each of these areas that are significantly higher than the overall average.

We need to bolster our efforts aimed at prevention, and we need to do more to return our

citizens to normal productive lives when their lives have been overtaken by drug abuse. And we should steer our policies and our resources away from the overly militaristic and supply-side strategies of recent years.

They do not work and the money would be better spent on proven effective ways to combat drugs and drug use.

While resolutions such as this are nice, they do not provide the additional resources necessary to provide prevention and treatment services for all who need them.