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**SCHAKOWSKY CALLS ON ADMINISTRATION TO TAKE SOCIAL SECURITY
PRIVATIZATION OFF THE TABLE**

ADMINISTRATION'S PLAN IS OUT OF TOUCH WITH NATION'S MOST PRESSING NEEDS

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky today called on the Bush Administration to take Social Security privatization off the table in the wake of Hurricane Katrina at a rally with the Alliance for Retired Americans.

Representative Schakowsky's statement is below, as prepared for delivery:

This week, both the White House and Tom DeLay announced that Social Security privatization is still a top priority. Even a disaster the size of Hurricane Katrina won't divert them from their appointed path of destroying Social Security. Tom DeLay said he'd keep Congress in late this year in order to pass private accounts. The White House this week had the chutzpah to argue that "the vast spending that would be required to address the hurricane's impact adds to the need to change Social Security, which threatens to strain the budget in coming years." How's that for ignoring the fact that their plan will actually increase the national debt by over \$1 trillion in 10 years?

We have learned from experience that this Administration never gives up and neither will we. We are all focused on the enormous tragedy of Hurricane Katrina. All of us viewed the scenes in New Orleans and Biloxi with shock and shame - not shock and awe. How could this happen in our own country? This natural catastrophe points out dramatically that we face serious national problems - poverty, disparities, an "ownership society" in which those who could afford a car and gasoline or a flight out of town lived, while many of those who could not died. That's the natural catastrophe. Our national catastrophe is that we have an Administration that is inept, incompetent and uncaring.

This is an Administration that puts cronyism over competence. Who in their right mind - particularly after 9/11 - would appoint a person with absolutely no experience in disaster management to head FEMA? This is an Administration that puts tax cuts for the wealthy above meeting the needs of our country. Who makes it a higher priority to push \$1 trillion in estate tax cuts for the richest 52,000 families while cutting funding to rebuild levees in New Orleans,

improve port security, and promote public health capabilities. This is an Administration that is trying to manufacture a crisis in Social Security - a shining success that can pay full benefits until 2052 and about 80 percent of benefits after that - while ignoring real crises like health care costs, pensions, and outsourcing. This is an Administration that puts their corporate donors' interests ahead of the rest of America.

Instead of making prescription drugs affordable, the Republicans twisted arms to push a bill that prohibits Medicare from negotiating for discounts, like the VA and large employers do today. Instead of preventing oil companies from price gouging, the Bush Administration and Republican Congress allow Big Oil to reap obscene profits - and then give them tax breaks at our expense. While the number of uninsured grew last year by nearly 1 million - leaving 46 million Americans with no coverage and many more with inadequate coverage - the Bush Administration and Republican Congress want to cut Medicaid by \$10 billion so millionaires can enjoy an average \$140,000 tax cut next year. And, as you all know, anyone who wants proof that the Bush Administration and Republican Congress put their corporate cronies first and America second just has to look at the President's Social Security privatization proposal.

Privatization will require deep cuts in guaranteed benefits - over 40% for future retirees. It will increase the deficit for decades to come. It will make Social Security less - not more - secure, moving up the date of solvency by a decade. In other words - under privatization - every one and every generation loses. Everyone, that is, except Wall Street. Privatization is a bad deal for young workers, older workers, disabled workers, their families and their survivors. It is time to take privatization off the table so that parents and their children can rest a little easier about their financial future.

The Bush Administration and Republican Congress are also a bad deal for America, whether you live in New Orleans, want affordable health care, or believe in good jobs and educational opportunities. And it is time to take our country back by electing Democrats who will put America first.

We can and we must win the Social Security battle and the fight to take back America.