

**SEPTEMBER 7, 2005**

**SCHAKOWSKY CONDEMNS INADEQUATE HURRICANE RESPONSE, CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION TO AVERT AN ENERGY CRISIS**

**SAYS: "DO NOT LEAVE AMERICANS OUT IN THE COLD WHILE THE ENERGY COMPANIES ARE LEFT WITH MONEY TO BURN"**

**WASHINGTON, DC** - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), ranking member on the Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection Subcommittee, in a hearing of the Energy and Commerce Committee today condemned the Bush Administration for inadequately planning for and responding to Hurricane Katrina. She called on the Administration and her colleagues to act immediately to provide relief to American consumers and to ensure that energy costs remain affordable as the winter heating season approaches.

Schakowsky said today that in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, ". . . the federal government failed in its primary mission: providing for the safety and security of its citizens. . . . Many Americans shook their heads and asked, 'Is this My Country?'"

Schakowsky continued: "Hurricane Katrina was a natural disaster that became a national disaster because of the Bush Administration's failure to prepare for this or any crisis."

"The question is, are we going to act now to prevent a catastrophic energy crisis or will we wait to scramble to pick up the pieces in the aftermath?" asked Schakowsky. "This time," she continued, "the President and the Congress have to anticipate a breach in the levees."

She concluded by asking Congress to accept its duty and avert an even more widespread crisis. "American lives were unnecessarily lost. The only way to mitigate this pending catastrophe is for Congress to be bold enough to enact laws that will hold down costs, prevent profiteering off the backs of the American people, and protect those who are hit hardest by higher utility bills."

Representative Schakowsky's full statement follows:

Americans have been riveted to their televisions watching with shock and shame (not shock and awe) as the Federal Government failed in its primary mission: providing for the safety and security of its citizens. As reporters and camera crews brought images that looked like they came from a third world country instead of the superpower of the world, as they were able to make it to the Superdome and Convention Center, Americans waited in disbelief for help to arrive. For many, help came too late.

This predictable and predicted catastrophe, as the Chicago Sun-Times wrote, "exposed the plight of the nation's have-nots" -- all those, Americans - not refugees from another country, but the millions of Americans who are not part of the ownership society. Now we know what that means. If you own a car, you can escape disaster. If you own a tank of gasoline, or enough money to buy a hotel room, you might survive in this ownership society. Make no mistake. Millions of Americans are angry, millions of Americans are ashamed, and yes, no matter how they may be scolded for doing so, they blame the Federal Government, they blame this Administration, for failing to do its job, failing to prepare for this crisis and failing to deal with it. Many Americans shook their heads and asked, "Is this my country?" Newt Gingrich said, "As a test of homeland security, this was a failure. This is not a moment to defend inadequacy."

Other crises and potential crises are now looming, and we in Congress have a responsibility as well to face up to that fact and deal with it. One of those is an energy crisis. The question is, are we going to act now to prevent a catastrophic energy crisis or will we wait to scramble to pick up the pieces in the aftermath? This time, the President and the Congress have to anticipate a breach in the levees.

In my view, we already squandered an opportunity to look ahead and mitigate an energy crisis that leaves our country at the mercy of hurricanes and vulnerable oil rigs and oil refineries, when this committee and this Congress passed an energy bill that the President's own experts said, even in the short term, could increase prices at the pump. Days BEFORE Katrina struck, the price of a barrel of crude was \$66, double what it was in January 2004. In Chicago, the price of gas was already nearly \$3 per gallon, the highest in the country. Katrina exacerbated a pre-existing condition.

Now we must assure that immediate needs are met and that we look ahead at the cost, not only of gasoline, but, as the cold weather approaches, heating oil and natural gas. How are the poor, who because of Katrina now have a face, going to stay warm? But also, what about middle-class families, small businesses and farmers? Our constituents can't afford \$1,000

monthly heating bills. Can we look that far ahead and plan? In the aftershocks of Katrina can we leave Americans out in the cold while energy companies are left with money to burn?

I hope that no member has the audacity to suggest that weakening environmental standards or drilling in the Artic Wilderness or any other transparent political fix will alleviate this energy crisis. The only way to mitigate this pending catastrophe is for Congress, with this great committee taking the lead, to be bold enough to enact laws that will hold down costs, prevent profiteering off the backs of the American people, and protect those who are hit hardest by increases in energy costs.