

AUGUST 29, 2005 SCHAKOWSKY: IRAQI CONSTITUTION UNDERMINES RIGHTS OF WOMEN, RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky today released a statement on the Iraqi constitution presented to the Iraqi National Assembly on Sunday. The Constitution includes a provision declaring Islam to be the official religion of the state and stipulates that no law passed can contradict the rules of Islam. The Constitution also will place experts in Sharia, such as Islamic clerics, on the Supreme Federal Court of Iraq. The Iraqi people will now decide whether to approve the Constitution in an October 15th referendum.

Representative Schakowsky's statement is below:

"The Constitution presented to the Iraqi National Assembly yesterday could give conservative Islamic clerics the power to turn back the clock on women's rights and religious freedoms in Iraq by decades."

"For decades, Iraqi women could drive, attend co-educational schools and work in offices alongside men, have their testimony considered in full in court, and divorce their husbands while keeping custody of their children. This Constitution could usher in an era when those rights are no longer protected."

"After misleading the American people about the reasons it launched a war with a country that did not threaten the United States, the Bush Administration finally argued that the purpose for the war was to free the Iraqi people from a brutal dictator and bring them freedom and democracy. Yet they aggressively pushed this Constitution and were willing to sacrifice the fundamental rights of the Iraqi people in order to meet an arbitrary, self-imposed deadline."

"How ironic and tragic it would be if thousands of Americans and Iraqis were killed and hundreds of billions of dollars spent in order to establish a fundamentalist state in which the status of women and religious minorities were actually diminished."