

**MARCH 17, 2005**

**SCHAKOWSKY REINTRODUCES VISITABILITY LEGISLATION  
TO INCREASE NUMBER OF HOMES ACCESSIBLE TO PERSONS WITH MOBILITY  
IMPAIRMENTS**

**WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today reintroduced legislation to increase the number of homes accessible to persons with mobility impairments. The Inclusive Home Design Act, which is supported by numerous disability organizations, would require all newly-built single family homes and townhouses receiving federal funds to meet the following specific standards:**

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- **Include at least one accessible, or "zero step," entrance into the home.□**
  
- **Ensure all doorways on the main floor have a minimum of 32 inches of clear passage space.□**
  
- **Build at least one wheelchair accessible bathroom on the main floor.□**
  
- **Place electrical and climate controls (such as light switches and thermostats) at reachable heights.□**

**The goal of the Inclusive Home Design Act is to greatly increase the number of homes that are accessible to people with disabilities. It is based on the concept of "visitability": an affordable, sustainable and inclusive design approach that integrates accessibility features into newly-built homes. Visitability standards have been adopted by a number of towns and states, including Naperville, Bollingbrook and Urbana, Illinois; Atlanta, Georgia; Pima County, Arizona; Vermont; Texas; and Kansas.□ □**

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**"Currently, only 5% of new single-family homes and townhouses built with federal assistance require any access features that make it possible for people with mobility impairments to live in or even visit. That is unfair and unacceptable," Schakowsky said.**

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Schakowsky pointed out that homes that meet visitability standards are essential for people with disabilities, sensible because 3 out of 10 people will face a disability before they are 67, and practical if you want to invite a friend or a family member over for dinner who is disabled.

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"It makes no sense to build new homes that block people out when it is easy and cheap to build new homes that let people in and allow people to stay in their homes.□ That is why I will continue to work with advocates and my colleagues in Congress toward the passage of the Inclusive Home Design Act," Schakowsky said□

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The legislation applies to new construction, not renovations of existing homes.□ The average added cost per home for the required features run from \$98 (for homes built on a concrete slab) to \$573 (for homes with a basement or crawl space).□ In multi-story homes, the requirements apply only to the main floor.

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□ **Organizations Supporting the Legislation:**

**American Association of People with Disabilities**

**American Association on Mental Retardation**

**American Council of the Blind**

**American Network of Community Options and Resources**

**Access Living**

**Access to Independence**

**American Network of Community Options and Resources**

**ARISE**

**Arlington Commission on Aging**

**Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law**

**Brain Injury Association of the United States**

**Chicago Rehab Network**

**Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities in Illinois**

**Congress for the New Urbanism**

**Disabilities Rights Action Coalition**

**Easter Seals**

**Iowa City Human Rights Commission**

**Living Independence Network Corporation**

**Making Choices for Independent Living**

**National Alliance for the Mentally Ill**

**National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems**

**National Association of the Councils on Developmental Disabilities**

**National Council on Independent Living**

**National Multiple Sclerosis Society**

**National Organization on Disability**

**Paralyzed Veterans of America**

**The Arc of the United States**

**Takoma Area Coalition of Individuals with Disabilities**

**United Cerebral Palsy**

**VSA Arts of Georgia**

