

MARCH 10, 2005

**SCHAKOWSKY'S STATEMENT
ON STEROIDS IN SPORTS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today delivered the following statement on steroids in sports during a hearing of the Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection Subcommittee:

Thank you, Chairman Stearns. I would also like to thank Ranking Member Brown and Chairman Deal for working with us on today's hearing about the growing use of steroids by athletes. Representative Ryun, I also appreciate you taking time out of your schedule to share your perspective on this issue. Being one of the few Olympians - and world record holders - in Congress, I believe your insights will be quite helpful for us as we try to grapple with this problem.

While we are going to be discussing steroid use on all levels of sports, from high school to professional athletes, I am especially concerned about young athletes, the high school and college students. According to a study by the National Collegiate Athletic Association, steroid use among athletes increased by 27 percent from 1996 through 2000. A survey by the University of Michigan found that 54 percent more high school seniors took steroids in 2003 than did in 1996. And, the Center for Disease Control reported in May of 2004 that approximately 800,000 high school students who have used or are using anabolic steroids.

These young athletes are taking steroids to meet body ideals and physical-performance standards that cannot be achieved without artificial enhancement. They are judging their abilities and their appearances on curves where the highest standard is set by synthetic performance boosters. They are trying to be "super-human."

What they don't realize or appreciate the deleterious effects of steroids. While they think they are building themselves up, they are tearing their health down. Of particular concern is the permanent damage that the very young competitor who uses steroid experiences. For instance, although steroids deliver lean muscle mass and strength, the terrible irony is that the use also promotes premature skeletal maturation and their growing bones are stunted. They also are putting themselves at greater risk of ligament

and tendon injury - not to mention heart attacks, liver failure, infertility and other permanent and irreversible problems.[] []

It is our responsibility to ask why our young athletes are doing this to themselves.[] I believe part of the cause is that there is a ripple effect through the athletic world around steroid use.[] High schoolers and college players are seeing professional athletes making millions of dollars off of their steroid-enhanced performances and know that use is rewarded.[] [] Today's "corked bat" is a "juiced up" player.[] I believe that when they call out "play ball," the playing field should be even, safe, and healthy.[] However, pro-athlete steroid abuse that is not the only reason young athletes are turning to steroids, and we need to explore the other factors that may be contributing to it.[] I think we need to look at whether the students are seeing their only means to get to college is through an athletic scholarship and the only way to get an athletic scholarship is if they are the biggest and the best.[] And, how can they be the biggest and the best if one of their teammates is "pumped up?"[] I think we need to look at the pressures that parents, coaches, and peers are putting on young athletes to look and do better than is naturally possible.[] And, I also think we need to get to the bottom of where the steroids are coming from and how their use is going mostly unnoticed - until it is too late.[] Mr. Hooton, I appreciate you being here today to share your son, Taylor's story.[] You have turned your personal tragedy into a much needed public awareness campaign that will help us get to the bottom of this and save lives.[] Thank you.[] []

Again, Chairmen Stearns and Deal, I appreciate you calling today's hearing.[] I am glad that we have witnesses from the various sports, medical, and research organizations to provide a comprehensive view of what steroids are doing to athletes.[] I also hope that we can show the same commitment to getting a complete picture when we consider cuts to Medicaid this year.[] Thank you.