

JANUARY 6, 2005

## SCHAKOWSKY APPLAUDS FORMAL OBJECTION TO CERTIFICATION OF OHIO'S ELECTORAL VOTES

### MEMBERS USE OPPORTUNITY TO HIGHLIGHT VOTING IRREGULARITIES AND CALL FOR ELECTORAL REFORMS

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today applauded the formal objection by U.S. Representative Stephanie Tubbs Jones (D-OH) and Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) to the certification of Ohio's electoral votes. The objection was made to give members of Congress the opportunity to debate voting irregularities and voter disenfranchisement in Ohio during the 2004 presidential election. After two hours of debate in each chamber, the election was certified.

Schakowsky delivered the following statement on the House floor during debate on the motion:

Mr. Speaker, Nothing is more critical to the foundation of our democracy than the guaranteed right to vote. In the 2004 Presidential election, there were voters in every state, including the pivotal state of Ohio, who were denied that right, and each time it happened, the foundation is weakened. That is why I join my colleagues today in objecting to the counting of Ohio's electoral votes.

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I commend my colleagues from Ohio, Michigan and Illinois for their leadership and tireless effort on behalf of all Americans and for their courage in leading this protest. I am proud to join them.

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Almost 40 years after the Voting Rights Act of 1965, voting irregularities in Ohio were evident for the whole country, the whole world to see. Were minorities unfairly targeted and harassed in Ohio? Yes! Did election officials permit the destruction of ballots and the tampering of electronic voting machines in Ohio? Tragically, the evidence points in that direction. Did Ohio state officials provide insufficient equipment to poor and minority precincts? Yes! Did many voters have to wait up to ten hours to cast their ballot? Sadly, yes. Is Ohio's top election official also that state's director of the Bush/Cheney election campaign? Of course he was.

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There is little disagreement that irregularities did occur. The question is what are we

going to do about it? It is simply not sufficient to tell the losers in the election to get over it or to accuse them of sour grapes. It is our patriotic duty to stand up for every voter, no matter race or party affiliation and demand that Congress act to expand voter protection and guarantee voter rights. Once all the facts are determined, a national demand for electoral reform must force Congress to finally finish the job begun under the Help America Vote Act, including voter verified paper trail.

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We cannot simply sit back and accept the results as if nothing, possibly illegal, has taken place in precincts throughout Ohio. Those Ohio election officials who denied voters provisional ballots, a portion of the voting reform bill that I championed, must be held accountable, along with those who allowed machines to be tampered with, eligible voters to be purged illegally and voters to be intimidated.

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President Bush and most of my colleagues in Congress protested the illegitimate election results in Ukraine. In that same spirit of promoting and strengthening democracy and ensuring the right to vote, I formally protest Ohio's electoral votes. What happened in Ohio should never happen again and I urge all members to join with us to make election reform a top priority. This is our chance to demonstrate to all our citizens and the world that Americans are constantly working to perfect our own democracy.