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**SCHAKOWSKY CALLS ON SUBCOMMITTEE TO LOOK INTO HURRICANE RESPONSE INSTEAD OF FOOTBALL**

WASHINGTON, DC - WASHINGTON, DC -- U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky, ranking member on the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection, today called on the subcommittee to focus on the most important issues that face Americans at a hearing on the NCAA Bowl Championship Series.

Representative Schakowsky's statement is below:

I'd like to thank the witnesses for joining us today for an interesting, if not a pressing, inquiry into the manner in which the NCAA College Football National Championship is determined. I want to extend a special welcome to Mr. Delany who is representing the Big Ten, the conference under which my alma mater, the University of Illinois, falls and which is headquartered in my district.

Although there is interest in my district about the Bowl Championship Series - it is also home to Northwestern University, another member of the Big Ten Conference - I believe more of my constituents are wondering why this committee is taking time out of the legislative calendar for football as opposed to other, more pressing issues. As many know, this hearing was moved from the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee because Democrats raised concerns about other more significant hearings that should be held, particularly about Hurricane Katrina healthcare recovery. Our subcommittee should also be following up on Katrina and what is needed to help the huge tourist industry in New Orleans recover, examining how well the ports are functioning, and also monitoring how commerce in the Gulf Coast is progressing - or not. Surely, this would be more useful than discussing a football bowl system that most colleges - including Texas - are very happy with now. And, by the way, there is a bowl game in New Orleans, the Sugar Bowl. Those tens of millions of tourist dollars are going to Atlanta because of the non-recovery going on in New Orleans.

With my concerns noted, there have been issues raised about how the BCS works. The goal of the BCS is to assign teams to prestigious and lucrative Bowls in a fair and credible fashion, and use this system to crown a single national champion at the end of each season. However, the Bowl Championship Series' record has had its share of controversies over how those decisions are made. The various changes that have been implemented since its inception in 1998 have not alleviated questions that a number of football followers have over how the rankings are decided. The system has been adjusted to address particular points of contention, but there are still concerns about whether the BCS is the clearest and fairest basis for choosing the championship contenders. This season, few can argue that the system has not produced an

appealing national title game, with the only two undefeated teams, Texas and USC, scheduled to meet in the Rose Bowl on January 4th. Last season, however, left a bitter taste in some football fans mouths when an undefeated school, Auburn, was left without a chance to compete for a championship.

It is misleading to argue that these controversies have been caused by the implementation of the Bowl Championship Series. Prior to its introduction, college football had a system that made no attempt to determine a single champion by any method other than national polls, and teams were selected for bowls on grounds that were arguably based purely on popularity and profits.

One model that has been presented to restructure the college football playoff system is the multi-tier postseason. Northwestern University and the University of Illinois are among a number of major universities that have opposed this concept. Opponents believe that a multi-tier playoff will greatly diminish the importance of college football's regular season. It would also place a greater burden on the cities that currently host bowl games by denying host cities the significant economic stimulus that they have long experienced. Finally, a multi-tier playoff system for Division 1-A has been fully discussed and has been found to be ill-advised and unworkable by a strong majority of university presidents. I agree with Northwestern and the University of Illinois that another solution must be found and I think that that solution can be found within the current parameters of the bowl system itself.

Before us today are a number of knowledgeable and influential participants in the Bowl Championship Series, and I look forward to finding out what, if anything, should be done to improve the BCS process. I also look forward to holding hearings on more pressing issues in our subcommittee. Thank you.