

NOVEMBER 8 , 2005

SCHAKOWSKY: AVIAN FLU IS A WEAPON OF MASS DESTRUCTION

CALLS FOR BETTER AND MORE IMMEDIATE RESPONSE PLAN

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky today raised serious questions about the failure by the Bush Administration to adequately address the avian flu in a hearing before the Energy and Commerce Committee.

The text of Representative Schakowsky's statement is below:

This Administration has been looking high and low for non-existent weapons of mass destruction, going to war and spending hundreds of billions of dollars because of these phantom weapons. Turns out, there is a weapon of mass destruction. It's called the avian flu, and this Administration has done pathetically little to protect our people from a killer that could take the lives of 500,000 Americans.

Why do we have only enough antivirals on hand to treat 1% of the population? Why does the plan spend so little on international surveillance - the equivalent of fighting the war there so we don't have to fight it here? Why are relying so heavily and giving so little to states and at the same time cutting \$130 million from state and local health initiatives? Why is one of the first proposals from this Administration one to shield drug companies from liability and depriving those injured by the vaccine from fair compensation? Why do other countries have better, more detailed plans, and how do we justify to the American people these words from our plan: "It is unlikely that there will be sufficient personnel, equipment, and supplies to respond adequately to multiple areas of the country for a sustained period of time?"

This is not a terrorist attack. This is not a hurricane. This is a long, known and certain danger. Can't America, can't this Administration do better?