

NOVEMBER 7 , 2005

SCHAKOWSKY URGES PASSAGE OF BILL EXPANDING ACCESS TO SAFE WATER

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky today delivered a statement in support of H.R. 1973, the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act. The bill, which Representative Schakowsky co-sponsored, would increase access to safe water and sanitation worldwide and help the millions of people who die unnecessarily because of unsafe drinking water conditions. The bill passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 319-34.

Representative Schakowsky's full statement is below:

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1973, the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act. And I want to thank my colleague, the author of this legislation, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. Blumenauer) for his leadership on this critical issue and for doing great honor to the name of one of my dear departed friends. The late Senator Paul Simon, my friend from Illinois, was one of our strongest proponents of the need for U.S. leadership in addressing the global water crisis. He considered his book on this topic, Tapped Out, one of the most important works of his life. Senator Simon stated: "In our world increasing numbers of people cannot assume they will be nourished and sustained, and within a few years, a water crisis of catastrophic proportions will explode on us - unless aroused citizens in this and other nations demand of their leadership actions reflecting vision, understanding, and courage."

If Senator Simon were with us today he would certainly point out the fact that globally, over 1 billion people lack adequate access to safe drinking water and over 2 billion have no access to proper sanitation. Five million people, mostly children, die unnecessarily from water-related diseases each year. This is not just a problem that affects other countries. Three of our fastest growing states - California, Texas, and Florida - are feeling the squeeze on water supplies and will soon face major difficulties unless we take action now. In Illinois and the other Great Lakes states, we are faced with challenging resource management issues as we seek to preserve and protect our nation's largest fresh water supply and the largest free-flowing supply of fresh water on earth.

Mr. Speaker, it is in Senator Simon's memory and because of the urgency of this issue, that I support the Water for the Poor Act. As Senator Simon wrote, "No other nation has the capabilities and resources to lead." Because water is a finite resource that is essential to all

forms of life, U.S. policies should seek to ensure that all people have access to clean water to meet their basic needs. Senator Simon's wife Patty Simon is working hard to carry on his legacy and this critically important mission and each member of this body should join in that critically important effort.

The Water for the Poor Act will help to increase access to safe water and sanitation worldwide in an affordable and equitable way. It expresses the policy that the United States needs to increase the amount of funds available for water and sanitation, supports innovative funding mechanisms, greater international coordination, and better integration of water and sanitation into other development efforts. Finally, it requires the development of a strategy to meet specific goals and benchmarks on the way to halving the percentage of people without access to safe water and sanitation.

At the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, the United States and 185 other countries agreed to the goal of cutting in half the percentage of people without access to safe water and basic sanitation in the world by 2015. The United States should lead in meeting and exceeding that goal. The Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act is the best first step in that direction. I, again, thank and commend my colleague and all of the cosponsors of this important legislation. And I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 1973.