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SCHAKOWSKY SPEAKS OUT AGAINST BILL THAT HURTS VICTIMS, PROTECTS INDUSTRY

WASHINGTON, DC - "I rise in opposition to S. 397, the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act. I believe this bill unfairly grants the gun industry immunity and takes away an individual's or state's ability to hold gun manufacturers, gun dealers, and gun trade associations accountable for negligence and product liability standards that apply to other industries. The bill perpetuates the gun industry's disregard for public safety and holds up their 'see-no-evil, hear-no-evil, speak-no-evil' approach to gun manufacturing and distribution.

□

My opposition to S. 397 is an effort to crack down on negligent gun companies whose sole interest is making money even when it is at the expense of innocent lives and law enforcement. This bill would void a number of pending cases around the country which seek to hold the gun industry accountable for its actions. That includes cases brought against the gun industry by the City of Chicago and Cook County on behalf of victims of a shooting rampage a few years ago. That one tragic incident killed Ricky Byrdsong and injured others in our community. Those cases charge that the gun industry causes a public nuisance by being negligent in gun sales practices, particularly by making them available to minors and others who are banned from owning guns. This bill takes us backwards and gives immunity to the very industry that has the power to regulate the manufacturing and distribution of its products. □ One death by a handgun is too many. □ But when 647 people are murdered by guns in one year in just one city, as was the case in Chicago in 2002, now is not the time to give immunity to the gun industry.

Although I oppose S. 397, I support an amendment that was added to this bill before it passed in the Senate. □ The amendment offered by Sen. Kohl draws its provisions from the Child Safety Lock Act. □ It would prohibit the sale, delivery, or transfer by a licensed importer, manufacturer, or dealer of a handgun to anyone who does not have a secure gun storage or safety device. □ Child-safety locks cost as little as \$10 and could save lives if sold with firearm. □ In fact, the Illinois House of Representatives passed a bill this year that will require gun dealers to sell child-safety locks with every handgun, to help prevent children from shooting themselves or others. □ This is important because our children possess the physical strength to accidentally fire a gun. □ According to the

Illinois Council against Handgun Violence, 25% of 3 to 4 year old, 70% of 5 to 6 years old, and 90% of 7 to 8 year olds can fire most handguns. The American Bar association believes that a locking device to prevent accidental firing should be a standard for the gun industry as seat belts are for the car industry. I support this amendment, and I hope it is enacted.

S. 397 would strip away the legal rights of gun violence victims, including law enforcement officers and their families, to seek redress against irresponsible gun dealers and manufacturers. That is why the American Trial Lawyers Association, the American Bar Association, as well as law enforcement officers oppose this bill. As it is, guns are one of the few consumer products that are exempt from health and safety regulations. Therefore, litigation is the last opportunity for victims of firearm violence to hold the gun industry accountable when it acts negligently or recklessly. This bill would protect the gun industry at the expense of gun violence victims. We must not let the gun industry off the hook. I urge my colleagues to vote 'no' on S. 397."