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**SCHAKOWSKY JOINS ASIAN COMMUNITY LEADERS TO WARN AGAINST
GROWING CRISIS**

CHICAGO, IL - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today joined leaders in the Asian community to warn against a growing crisis where elderly and disabled Vietnamese, Cambodian and Chinese refugees have lost or are about to lose their Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

Refugees and asylum seekers who are elderly, blind or disabled qualify for SSI, a federal program that provides financial assistance of \$552/month. However, the 1996 welfare reform law requires that they become naturalized within seven years in order to continue receiving benefits. At no fault of their own, many elderly, blind and disabled refugees and asylees have been unable to meet this 7-year due to:

- **Extraordinary delays by the U.S. government in processing their citizenship applications, further aggravated by new post-9/11 security precautions.**

- **The difficulty of the process for persons of advancing years and deteriorating mental capacity, often compounded by the lasting effects of exposure to extreme physical deprivation and psychological trauma.**

At a news conference organized by the Organization of the NorthEast (ONE), Chinese Mutual Aid, Vietnamese Association of Illinois, and the Cambodian Association, Schakowsky said, "We welcomed these elderly men and women into our nation at a time when they had no other place to turn. I call on Congress and President Bush to show compassion by immediately restoring the few hundred dollars a month that are essential to the survival of these refugees and asylees."

Schakowsky is a cosponsor of HR 4035, SSI Extension for Elderly and Disabled Refugees Act, to extend the seven year deadline by two-years. In addition, the bill is retroactive and would extend benefits to those who have been cut off.

As many as 227 elderly, blind and disabled Illinois refugees/asylees lost eligibility for SSI in 2003 due to the 7-year limit and another 583 may lose eligibility in 2004.