

November 19, 2003

**SCHAKOWSKY APPLAUDS PASSAGE**

**OF FAIRNESS TO CONTACT LENS CONSUMERS ACT WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S.**

Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) applauded the passage of pro-consumer legislation guaranteeing that the thirty-six million contact lens users are provided with a copy of their prescription from their doctor so they will have the freedom to shop for the best deal possible for filling their contact lens needs. Current law requires doctors to provide patients with their eyeglass prescription.

Schakowsky, an original cosponsor of The Fairness to Contact Lens Consumers Act, H.R. 3140, said the bill would require eye doctors and optometrists to provide patients with a copy of their contact lens prescription, regardless of whether or not the patient asks for a copy. Under this measure, eye doctors and other prescribers are prohibited from requiring that consumers buy contact lenses from them as a condition of performing an eye exam or providing the prescription.

"We have a duty to make sure that consumers' interests are being met, that they have access to affordable and safe contact lenses, and that uniform standards regulate this process nationwide. Under this bill, consumers will be entitled to a copy of their contact lens prescription from their doctor. That way, they will have the freedom to shop around and find the best deal possible for filling their contact lens needs," Schakowsky said, the ranking Democrat on the Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection Subcommittee.

Under the legislation, when consumers place orders with third party contact lens vendors, those vendors must verify the prescription with doctors. Patients' doctors will then have eight hours to respond. If they do not, the prescription will be deemed valid by the vendor and the order filled.

"These safeguards coupled with time requirements will ensure prompt and safe access to contact lenses at affordable prices for consumers," Schakowsky said.

Schakowsky added, "In the best interest of fairness to consumers and doctors, this legislation establishes clear, uniform rules that will guarantee fairness and safety to contact lens consumers in every state-regardless of existing laws and creates a verification system that will ensure prompt filling of contact lens prescriptions."

The American Optometric Association endorsed H.R. 3140. The Senate is expected to act on companion legislation in the near future.