

NOVEMBER 19, 2003

SCHAKOWSKY APPLAUDS EFFORTS AGAINST SHAM DRUG BILL WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, issued the following statement in support of efforts in Illinois to defeat the Republican/pharmaceutical industry Medicare prescription drug bill pending before Congress.

Below is Schakowsky's statement:

"I applaud the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans, Metro Seniors in Action, Access Living and Citizen Action/Illinois for their commitment to our seniors, retirees and persons with disabilities.□ □

"We have fought many battles together to preserve Medicare, and won!□ And we will do it again.□ Seniors in Illinois and across the country are already mobilizing against this sham Republican prescription bill and President Bush's plan that destroys the essence of Medicare while enriching the pharmaceutical companies and HMOs.□ □

"It is unconscionable that any member of Congress or a senior organization would support legislation where nearly 10 million Medicare beneficiaries will actually be worse off - either paying more for their health care or being dropped by their employers from a superior drug program

"It is inexcusable for any public official to vote for a prescription drug legislation that does nothing to lower the cost of prescription drugs, but actually contains a section written for the pharmaceutical industry that prohibits Medicare from negotiating with the drug companies for lower prices.□ The drug companies are projected to realize a \$137 billion windfall profit if the bill becomes law.

"And it is dreadful that the bill begins the process of privatizing Medicare, introduces means testing for the first time, and contains a \$2,800 gap in coverage that will leave fully half of the seniors without drug coverage for part of the year.

□ "So I join real advocates for an affordable, voluntary and comprehensive Medicare prescription drug bill and say no to this sham legislation and remind members of Congress of what happened 14 years ago right here in Chicago.□ In 1989, seniors chased Congressmen down the street because they felt betrayed by the catastrophic health bill.□ Their message got through and the bill was repealed.□ □ □ My friendly advice to my colleagues in the Congress:□ "If you make the mistake of voting for this bill, you better make sure you bring your running shoes."