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SCHAKOWSKY: CONSTITUENTS DESERVE GUARANTEE THAT THEIR GOVERNMENT IS ACTING TO PREVENT FUTURE BLACKOUTS. RELIANCE ON MARKET AND INDUSTRY ALONE WILL NOT SUFFICE

CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION TO FIX DEFICIENCIES IN THE U.S. POWER GRID

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- During the first Congressional Hearing to determine the cause of the August 14, 2003 blackout, U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today said, "Reliance on voluntary standards, the market, and industry self-regulation will not suffice. We must act now to guarantee to our constituents that all appropriate steps are being taken to prevent similar disruptions in the future. And we must guarantee that consumers won't get stuck with the bill."

Schakowsky, during the Energy and Commerce Committee Hearing, added, "The August 14 blackout demonstrated that we can no longer delay fixing the deficiencies in the U.S. power grid. Past efforts to provide necessary fixes were derailed and we cannot allow for such roadblocks to prevent progress in the future."

Schakowsky presented the committee with a list of questions on behalf of her constituents, including:

- . What are we doing to protect them and when will they see the results?
- . Since we know the market alone will not work, what mechanisms are we going to employ to ensure our constituents and our states are not next? And, if it turns out that the blackout was due to the behavior of industry actors and not a transmission issue, what are we prepared to do in response?
- . Will we continue to allow incompetent utilities that threaten the entire U.S. energy grid to operate and what is the stick we can use to get them to clean up their acts?

Below is the full text of Schakowsky's Committee statement:

**Statement of the Honorable Jan Schakowsky
Committee on Energy and Commerce Hearing on the August 14, 2003 Blackout
September 3, 2003**

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I am pleased that the Committee is taking time to investigate the August 14 power outages that left millions of consumers in eight U.S. states and portions of Canada without electricity. This is a critical issue and consumers in affected states and others across the country deserve answers to the many questions about the blackout.

As city after city was announced, like many people, my first thought was to wonder if terrorism was the cause. The relief after finding out that, in this instance, it was not terrorism should be tempered by knowing that in a country as technologically advanced as the United States we have an electric grid that is outdated and vulnerable to such drastic disruptions, whatever the cause. While it is essential to find out exactly what happened in a deliberative way and that is what the Department of Energy task force is doing, many have been advocating for years that necessary fixes to the grid must be made, but unfortunately, those fixes have been derailed.

The August 14 blackout demonstrated to all of us that we can no longer delay fixing the deficiencies in the U.S. power grid. Past efforts to provide necessary fixes were derailed and we cannot allow such roadblocks to prevent progress in the future. We absolutely cannot hold an agreement on the power grid hostage on behalf of any unsound and unwarranted desire by some to open up the Alaska wilderness for drilling; an anti environmental move that would do nothing to prevent future blackouts.

We must move quickly to enforce reliability standards. Reliance on voluntary standards, the market, and industry self-regulation will not suffice. We must act now to guarantee to our constituents that all appropriate steps are being taken to prevent similar disruptions in the future. Particularly given the current poor state of the U.S. economy, we cannot afford a repeat of the disruption to commerce and personal lives that came along with the blackout. We must work in a constructive and bipartisan way to find solutions to the problems that caused the blackout. We need to move quickly and we cannot allow for extraneous issues or an irrational reliance on the market.

Our constituents deserve better and they deserve a guarantee that their government is acting to prevent future problems.

My constituents have a few major questions: What are we doing to protect them and when will they see the results? Since we know the market alone won't work, what mechanisms are we going to employ to ensure our constituents and our states are not next? And, if it turns out that the blackout was due to the behavior of industry actors and not a transmission issue, what are we prepared to do in response? Will we continue to allow incompetent utilities that threaten the entire U.S. energy grid to operate and what is the stick we can use to get them to clean up their acts?

These are critical questions that must be answered as we move ahead in this debate.