

JULY 25, 2003

SCHAKOWSKY: HOUSE REPUBLICANS DENY VETERANS NEEDED BENEFITS

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today faulted the Republicans for denying veterans the health care and benefits they deserve. Republicans on the Rules Committee did not allow the House the opportunity to vote on two amendments. One amendment would have increased the funding for veterans' health care to the levels promised in the budget resolution passed earlier this year. The other would have provided an additional \$2.2 billion for VA medical care by reducing the recently-passed tax cuts for taxpayers with yearly incomes in excess of a million dollars.

The full text of Schakowsky's Congressional Record statement is below:

The Real Meaning of Respect

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my opposition and my outrage over the rule designed to govern the debate over the FY04 VA-HUD Appropriations bill. This rule, by not allowing two amendments to be made in order, severely restricts the ability of this body to take care of its obligations. These two amendments, one by Representative Smith of New Jersey and Representative Evans of Illinois would have increased the funding for veterans' health care to the level that we promised in the budget resolution passed earlier this year. The other, by Representative Edwards of Texas, would have provided an additional \$2.2 billion for VA medical care by reducing the recently-passed tax cuts for taxpayers with yearly incomes in excess of a million dollars. Both amendments were shutdown by the Rules Committee on a party line vote. I am shocked that the House Republican leadership would make such a choice, but I am not surprised.

Repeatedly, we have seen the Republicans in this body choose to break their promises to millions of Americans so that they can give tax cuts to the already wealthy. They passed a Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill that left millions of children behind by failing to live up to their promise to provide enough funding to ensure that every child would receive a decent education. And now my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have turned their backs on veterans so that they can give their rich friends a slap on the back. I have heard my colleagues from the other side of the aisle speak at length about their deep respect for the service our veterans have performed for our country. But, I must ask if breaking promises to our veterans is the Republican way of showing them that respect. Is it respectful to mouth the words of respect while allowing our veterans to wait months for doctors' appointments and pay more for services? □ □

These amendments offered a very clear choice: would you rather provide enough money to ensure that veterans receive decent healthcare services or would you rather provide massive tax cuts that benefit millionaires? Who really cares about our nation's veterans? Who is really concerned about the people who have honorably served our country? Our veterans can not afford any more empty respect. I ask my colleagues to put the money where their mouths are and make the financial commitment to get veterans and their families the benefits they deserve.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this rule, to work to fulfill our obligations to our veterans and to show them our real respect.