

JUNE 26, 2003

**SCHAKOWSKY: REPUBLICAN MEDICARE BILL IS A LOUSY DEAL FOR SENIORS.
IT JUST PLAIN STINKS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Joined by a special guest during a news conference today, Stinky the Skunk, U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) said that the Republican Medicare bill is "a lousy deal for seniors." It just plain stinks."

The Republican bill dumps 50% of seniors into the "coverage gap" or "donut hole." This means that almost half of seniors who already met their deductible would be required to pay high premiums without receiving any benefits. And to protect pharmaceutical industry profits, the Republican House bill prohibits the Secretary of Health and Human Services from negotiating lower prices for Medicare beneficiaries, even though the Veterans Administration does just that for veterans.

Below is Schakowsky's statement from today's news conference.

Today, the House will vote on a bill that - if passed - will have terrible consequences for senior citizens and persons with disabilities and their families. There is a lot that the bill doesn't do:

- . It doesn't lower drug prices.*
- . It doesn't provide an affordable prescription drug benefit.*
- . It doesn't give seniors and disabled people what members of Congress have.*

But this fight is not just about what this bill doesn't do - it is about what this bill does to Medicare:

- . This bill will kill Medicare. And the Republican leadership isn't even trying to deny that. They don't want Medicare to wither on the vine - they want to pull it up by its very roots.*
- . It will force senior citizens and persons with disabilities into HMOs. Private insurance companies will decide what to charge and what to cover, where to market and when to pull out of a market.*

That's why senior citizens and people with disabilities all across the country are asking us to vote no. They know that this is a bad deal for them - not just in terms of prescription drugs but for all of their health care needs.

I am pleased to join my colleagues but I want to welcome our special guest. This skunk has traveled here today from Chicago - where seniors gathered to oppose this bill. It was in Albany on Monday. It's been in Iowa and Maine. And it will keep traveling the country to tell seniors everywhere what we know. This is a lousy deal for seniors. It just plain stinks.