

**MAY 26, 2003**

**SCHAKOWSKY HONORS FALLEN HEROES  
ON MEMORIAL DAY**

**CHICAGO, IL - On this Memorial Day, we somberly celebrate the lives of a new generation of fallen heroes and honor American soldiers who paid the ultimate price in battle. We offer our gratitude as a small measure of comfort to the families of the young American men and women who will not be returning home from Afghanistan or Iraq.**

**Like those Americans before them, these brave men and women heeded our nation's call to duty and followed their Commander-in-Chief's orders to go to battle, willingly and dutifully. They sacrificed their lives in wars and conflicts that their comrades are still fighting today.**

**As we pay tribute to the lost soldiers, we hope for the safe return of the men and women still on the battlefield, overseas and in hostile territory. To serve their country, they left behind families and loved ones, jobs and communities. But like millions of American soldiers through the years, they will be back on U.S. soil soon enough.**

**It is our duty to live up to the promises that we made to each and every one of those soldiers and to every veteran who served his or her nation. Unfortunately, the painful truth is veterans' critical needs are being ignored each day. It is shameful that 200,000 veterans must wait 6 months or more for their first appointment at a VA medical facility. It is disgraceful that the current Republican budget calls for cutting veterans' health care by \$6.2 billion over the next ten years. It is unpatriotic to burden our retired soldiers and their families with extra costs for prescription drugs and doctor visits.**

**Is this what our soldiers have to look forward to? A litany of broken promises? Congress and the President must keep their promises to the nation's veterans and make adequate investments in veterans' health care. Because of President Bush's budget priorities and tax breaks for millionaires, veterans will continue to suffer the consequences. Democrats have offered a plan to roll back health care cost increases imposed by the Bush Administration and the Republican Congress, expand health care access for veterans and educational opportunities for reservists, and provide cash bonuses to soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition, families of those killed on active duty would receive higher benefits under the Democratic proposal.**

**Our brave men and women have met all kinds of threats and have defeated unspeakable dangers, but they must not be forced to fight for what is rightfully theirs here at home. Our veterans may be gone from the military, but they must not be forgotten.**