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**SCHAKOWSKY JOINS CONGRESSIONAL  
FOOD SAFETY CAUCUS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky, a leading advocate for tougher federal controls to protect against food borne illnesses, today joined the Congressional Food Safety Caucus. Schakowsky is a longtime consumer advocate, who in 1969 led the fight that put freshness dates on products sold in the supermarket.

"Parents believe that there is a guarantee of safety that comes with the food that their children eat at home, at school and at restaurants. Sadly, that's not the case. Working with members of the Congressional Food Safety Caucus we can help provide parents with that critical guarantee," said Schakowsky, who is the ranking Democrat on the Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection Subcommittee.

Food-borne illnesses affect 76 million people each year. Of those individuals, approximately 325,000 will be hospitalized and more than 5,000 will die. Children are especially vulnerable and comprise nearly 40 percent of the victims.

Schakowsky warned that there is also evidence of serious problems with the school lunch program, which serves 27 million children each day. "Between 1990 and 2000, there were nearly 100 reported outbreaks of food-borne illness in schools affecting thousands of children, many of them resulting in significant health consequences," she said. "Only 17 percent of the food served in our schools is subject to stringent Agriculture Department safety guidelines for dangerous pathogens."

Schakowsky continued, "Parents would be appalled to know that the federal government has no authority to mandate the recall of contaminated foods sold to schools."

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Along with Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Schakowsky introduced The Safe School Food Act (HR1551) to address these concerns. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) is the Chief sponsor in the Senate. H.R. 1551 would:

- incorporate USDA safety guidelines into school procurement contracts to the maximum extent possible;
- give the Secretary of Agriculture authority to require pathogen testing of foods purchased by schools;
- provide state education agencies with current vendor information;
- develop effective methods to share supplier safety information with schools; and
- allow for mandatory recall of any tainted food.