

MARCH 28, 2003

**SCHAKOWSKY MEETS WITH
VETERANS IN DES PLAINES**

DES PLAINES, IL - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today met with veterans in Des Plaines. Schakowsky vowed to fight the cuts in veterans' health care and services proposed by the Bush Administration and the Republican Congress. The Republican budget cuts \$15 billion from veterans' benefits and \$9.7 billion from veterans' health programs.

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□ **"You have made a commitment to preserve our freedom here at home, even if it meant sacrificing your lives. I believe that our veterans deserve to be treated with honor and respect and I will work to ensure that our nation delivers on its promise to you," Schakowsky said.**

Schakowsky supported the Democratic budget substitute to the Republican proposal which would have restored funding for mandatory veterans' benefit programs including compensation for service-connected disabilities, burial benefits, pensions for permanently disabled low-income veterans, GI Bill benefits, rehabilitation benefits, and housing loan programs.

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Leading Veterans' organizations across the country opposed the Republican budget proposal:

- . The Disabled American Veterans: "Has Congress no shame? Is there no honor left in the hallowed halls of our government that you choose to dishonor the sacrifices of our nation's heroes and rob our programs - health care and disability compensation - to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy?" (March 17, 2003)**
- . The Paralyzed Veterans of America: "We do not consider payments to war-disabled veterans, pensions for the poorest disabled veterans and G.I. Bill benefits for soldiers returning from Afghanistan to be 'fraud, waste, abuse.'" (March 17, 2003)**
- . The America Legion: "This budget defies common sense. There must be a better way to provide tax relief to the American people than to balance the budget on the backs of disabled veterans." (March 14, 2003)**

Schakowsky, who is an advocate of ensuring that veterans receive timely access to care, said that she is working with her colleagues to increase management controls and oversight at military hospitals to guarantee quality medical services to veterans. □ □

Schakowsky is a cosponsor of legislation to improve the lives of veterans and their families across the country, including H.R. 303, the Retired Pay Restoration Act of 2003, a bill to guarantee that veterans have access to both disability compensation and retirement pay. She is also a cosponsor of H.R. 58, the Keep Our Promise to America's

Military Retirees Act, a bill that gives all retirees the option of using the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) - the same benefit that retired federal employees use.

Schakowsky also announced her intentions to reintroduce the Inclusive Home Design Act. This legislation, which is supported by national disability rights organizations including the Paralyzed Veterans Of America, will greatly increase the number of homes that are accessible to people with disabilities. The legislation requires all newly-built single family homes receiving federal funds to meet three specific accessibility standards: an accessible route, or "zero step," into the home, 32" clearance doorways on the main level to accessible wheelchairs, and one wheel chair accessible bathroom.