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**SCHAKOWSKY: HOUSE GOP TURN BACK
ON MILITARY FAMILIES, UNEMPLOYED,
AND VICTIMS OF TERRORISM**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today said that it was inexcusable for Republicans to refuse to help military families, the unemployed, and victims of international terrorism.

Republicans denied an effort by Schakowsky to improve the Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act of 2003, H.R. 975, and refused to allow her amendment to exempt unemployed workers, families of military personnel in Iraq, and victims of international terrorism from the bill's harsh and severe means test.

Schakowsky said that her amendment would have provided assistance to those individuals who "should be given an opportunity to get back on their feet, while still being obligated to take responsibility for their debts."

Schakowsky chided Republicans for turning their backs on the families of military men and women poised to invade Iraq. Schakowsky referred to a recent story on 60 Minutes. Mrs. Vicky Wessel, whose husband, a reservist, was sent overseas, said, "Emotionally, it's been tough not having a husband around, not having a father for the kids. But financially it's been really difficult, because a staff sergeant's pay is a 60 percent cut in pay from my husband's regular job."

"As we stand within hours of war in Iraq, we owe it to our soldiers to think about their financial vulnerabilities. There is a great possibility that the families of many of the brave men and women who go to war in Iraq will have economic problems. If we enter war with Iraq we can expect that some of these families will be forced to file for bankruptcy," She said.

Schakowsky added that without her amendment, H.R. 975 places greater hardships on the millions of workers who have lost their jobs in the faltering Bush economy and exhausted their unemployment benefits.

"Two-thirds of those filing for bankruptcy report a significant period of unemployment preceding their filing. We should make sure that people who have lost their job through no fault of their own are able to file for chapter 7 bankruptcy. We should make sure they have an opportunity to regain their economic independence," she said.

Schakowsky joined major consumer organizations, bankruptcy experts, women's groups, labor unions and other national groups to oppose H.R. 975. The legislation imposes burdens on middle-class families; makes it more difficult for single women to

collect child support; and does nothing to stop consumers against abusive credit card company practices or predatory lending. And, while 90% of all personal bankruptcies are caused by job loss, high medical bills or divorce, this bill does nothing to help consumers faced with those catastrophes.

"We must put the interests of ordinary American families, people in uniform, people who have lost their jobs, and people who are victims of terrorism, before the interests of profitable credit card companies. This is a bad bill that could not have come at a worst time," Schakowsky concluded.

The national coalition opposed to the bill includes AFL-CIO; American Association of University Women; Consumer Federation of America, NAACP; National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare; and United Auto Workers.