

FEBRUARY 12, 2003

SCHAKOWSKY APPLAUDS PASSAGE OF AMERICAN SPIRIT FRAUD PREVENTION ACT

WASHINGTON, D.C - September 11 was the worst attack and loss this country has ever experienced on our own soil. Countless lives were lost and the nation was confronted with a new reality, a harsh sense of our vulnerabilities. It was the darkest single day this nation has faced. The one saving grace, the one ray of hope that helped to combat the pain, suffering and sadness of the nation was the heroism, leadership, and commitment displayed by Americans who were determined to help.

Some helped by giving their lives. And their stories will inspire us forever. Others from across the country helped by giving. Americans made generous donations to provide aid to victims of the terrorist attacks. Over \$1 billion was raised for relief efforts and aid to victims' families in the wake of September 11 from donations large and small made by the American public.

Unfortunately, however, some in our country demonstrated the shameful side of humanity by attempting to illegally profit from the tragedy. Those individuals tried to exploit the generosity demonstrated by so many through fraudulent solicitations in which they claimed to be representing organizations benefiting the victims or providing emergency response services. While those despicable acts are already illegal, it is necessary for the Congress, on behalf of our constituents, to send a clear message that such behavior will be subject to even more severe penalties in the future.

Under H.R. 346, the American Spirit Fraud Prevention Act, the maximum civil fines for actions of fraud in attempt to profit from national emergencies, will be doubled.

These increased penalties will apply to all violations that occur within one year of the time the president declares a disaster and all violations that occur during - and up to one year after the expiration of - a presidential emergency declared under the National Emergencies Act.

The American public is caring and committed. We care for about the well-being of our neighbors and we are committed to do what we can to ensure prosperity and security for this nation. And we will not tolerate those who undermine and abuse the American spirit.