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**SCHAKOWSKY CALLS ON PRESIDENT BUSH
TO MAKE FOOD SAFETY A NATIONAL PRIORITY**

**DECRIES PROPOSED ADMINISTRATION BUDGET CUTS
IN USDA'S FOOD INSPECTION PROGRAMS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today called President Bush's proposed 10 percent cut in the Department of Agriculture's food inspection program "unconscionable." Schakowsky questioned the logic behind proposing these reductions when each year more than 325,000 people are hospitalized and 5,000 die from a foodborne illness.

"President Bush's proposal to cut USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service by 10 percent will weaken our nation's defenses against E. coli and other pathogens and will put the American people at risk. That is unconscionable," said Schakowsky, who is the ranking Democrat on the Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection Subcommittee.

She continued, "In order to assure that plants are being properly inspected, we need to provide more money to train and hire inspectors. President Bush in his budget proposes to hire only 80 new inspectors nationwide. That is not nearly enough."

"When it comes to food safety, we are already on Orange Alert. Five thousands people die each year from a foodborne illness, but if President Bush has his way with the budget, that alert will be Red," added Schakowsky during a news conference organized by Safe Tables Our Priorities (S.T.O.P.) to release Why are People Still Dying from Contaminated Food..

The report, unveiled by S.T.O.P President Nancy Donely, found that problems in the nation's food supply still exist ten years after contaminated hamburgers from Jack-in-the-Box killed four children and caused 700 illnesses. Findings in the report included:

- . chronic food-safety violations at slaughter and processing plants;
- . public health facilities inadequately prepared to respond to outbreaks of foodborne illnesses due to shortage of resources and technology;
- . insufficient regulation dealing with storage and transportation of food products;
- . too much focus is placed on consumer education instead of on measures that would keep pathogens out of the food supply in the first place.

Schakowsky applauded Donely, whose son Alex died at the age of six after eating a contaminated hamburger, and other advocates for their commitment to ensuring food safety and pledged to support their national Not One More! campaign to eliminate foodborne illnesses in the United States.

"I am here today to pledge my support for your mission to ensure that every family in Chicago and across the country can be confident that the food they and their children eat is safe, clean, and properly inspected. On behalf of all the brave mothers who lost a child to a foodborne illness but found the strength to stand up and demand that the government make food safety a top national priority, I join you in making that same demand," she concluded.