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SCHAKOWSKY CALLS COMPROMISE BILL TO CREATE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY A POLITICAL PAYOFF TO GOP ALLIES

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today said the compromise bill to create a homeland security department wrecks of politics and political payoffs. Just like the bill that was approved by the House on July 26th, the compromise legislation weakens civil service protections for workers.

"The American people deserve better. Republicans and President Bush should be ashamed of using the Department of Homeland Security to payoff their political allies and to go after the jobs of committed federal workers and public servants," Schakowsky said.

"The bill gives the President an excuse to take away hard-won civil service protections and collective bargaining rights for employees of the new Department. There is no national security rationale for stripping workers of their basic rights," Schakowsky added.

Schakowsky also warned that corporations would use the broad new secrecy provisions in the legislation that exempt them from the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to escape liability and hide information critical to protecting public safety. Under current law, the Administration can already refuse to disclose information that involves national security or trade secrets. The legislation goes far beyond current law, providing a blanket exception any time corporation provide voluntary information to the Department of Homeland Security.

In addition, Schakowsky added this bill is flawed because it provides an exemption from liability for manufacturers of equipment used for national security purposes. This broad protection for industry would apply even if company officials willfully neglect the welfare of the public in order to make profits.

Schakowsky continued that the legislation fails to address even the most obvious and immediate homeland security concerns -- the serious lack of information sharing and communication among the intelligence community, including the CIA and FBI.

"What the President and the Republicans in the House put forth is a massive reorganization of the federal government, nothing more than a reshuffling of the deck. Simply shifting people and agencies, weakening workers' rights, and disregarding the public right to know will not make America safer. We must refocus our efforts and find solutions that will actually enhance our security and maintain our American way of life," Schakowsky concluded.