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**SCHAKOWSKY WELCOMES PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION ENSURING PUBLIC'S ACCESS TO PRESIDENTIAL RECORDS AND ENSURING PUBLIC'S RIGHT TO KNOW**

**GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE APPROVES BILL RESCINDING PRESIDENT BUSH'S EXECUTIVE ORDER ON PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today welcomed the passage by the Government Reform Committee of the Presidential Records Act Amendments of 2002, H.R. 4187, legislation to rescind President Bush's Executive Order that greatly limits the public's access to presidential records. The Executive Order allows the sitting President to withhold the records of a former President, even if that President wants those records released. In addition, the order requires the public to show a specific need for a document before it is released.

Schakowsky is the ranking Democrats on the Government Efficiency Subcommittee and an original author of the legislation with Subcommittee Chairman Steve Horn (R-CA), ranking Democrat on the Full Government Reform Committee Henry Waxman (D-IL) and Chairman Dan Burton (R-IN).

Below is Schakowsky's Committee statement:

The debate over presidential records is a debate about public access. The Presidential Records Act is quite clear in its intent. After 12 years, deliberative documents, some of which are as much as 20 years old, must be released to the public.

The executive order issued by President Bush last year represents the over zealous work of an inexperienced lawyer who did not understand the law. As a number of witnesses at our hearings have testified, the Bush order tries to rewrite the law. A president cannot rewrite the law through executive order, and I am sure that none of my colleagues believe that such a precedent should be established.

The bill before us, as Mr. Waxman stated, returns the balance to the open public access intended by the Act, and by President Reagan when he issued his executive order governing the release of his own documents.

I share my colleagues' disappointment that this bill comes before the Committee at such a late date in this Congress. In times of crisis it is sometimes easy to forget the fundamental values upon which our nation was founded. One of those values is faith in the wisdom of an educated public. The Presidential Records Act, along with other legislation like the Freedom of Information Act and the Federal Advisory Committee Act - all of which are the responsibility of this committee - is the twentieth century response to challenges to our core values. We must not begin the 21st century undermining the

**principles upon which this nation was founded.**