

OCTOBER 3, 2002

SCHAKOWSKY PROMISES TO FIGHT FOR ILLINOIS' FAIR SHARE OF FEDERAL FUNDS TO COMBAT WEST NILE VIRUS

WASHINGTON, D.C. - During a Congressional hearing today, U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) said that she would continue to work to ensure that Illinois receives its fair share of federal funds to combat West Nile virus.□□

Schakowsky commended Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL) for securing additional funding for Illinois to deal with West Nile Virus.□ However, Schakowsky said, "I am concerned that Illinois - one of the most affected states in the nation - has not received its fair share of federal resources in combating this epidemic. While Illinois received \$300,000 at the beginning of the year and additional emergency funding in August and on September 30, the funding received by Illinois and the city of Chicago lags far behind those of other states. In fact, the totals for Illinois and the city of Chicago came out to \$1.6 million for the fiscal year out of a total of roughly \$35 million handed out to state and local health departments."□□

Schakowsky added, "The federal government must provide all the funding necessary so that Illinois and other states can continue to protect against the West Nile outbreak and other public health threats."

In the 9th Congressional District, there have been 42 confirmed cases of West Nile virus in the village of Skokie, almost 50 in Evanston, and 10 in Morton Grove and Lincolnwood. These numbers reflect the uncommonly high outbreak ratio in the Chicago metro area, which accounts for 86% of all cases throughout the state.

The hearing, which was held in the Government Reform Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources, explored the public health implications of West Nile Virus and the federal response. Dr. Lumpkin, Illinois Health Department Director, testified before the subcommittee.

"We need to do much more to educate the public.□ We need to do more multilingual outreach.□ We need to do more to alert the elderly to this problem, who are particularly vulnerable, and the steps they can take to protect themselves.□ We need to reach special populations through a multimedia campaign and by direct outreach,"□ Schakowsky said.

She continued, "We need a major new investment in our public health care system to prepare not just for future West Nile outbreaks but all possible health threats - the expected as well as the unexpected."

Schakowsky concluded, "As a Chicagoan, I never thought I would find myself praying for

an early and a cold winter but I am. Winter will give us some relief. But it should not lull us into inaction. We must continue our efforts to protect the people of Illinois and the nation."