

June 11, 2002

SCHAKOWSKY ADDRESSES BRIEFING ON "RUSHING TO FAILURE IN 2004: IS MISSILE DEFENSE TESTING ADEQUATE?"

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- I would like to commend Congressman Tierney for his continuing efforts to alert the public to the Administration's abandonment of the Anti Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and their "stop at nothing" approach to moving forward with plans to develop a so-called missile defense system that won't work. I would also like to thank Mr. Phillip Coyle, Dr. Lisbeth Gronlund, and Eric Miller for their work and dedication to ensuring that Congress and the American people understand that it is not okay for the Administration to spend taxpayer dollars on an unproven system. Spending money on a program with virtually no oversight, and even less accountability is an abuse of taxpayer funds and the trust of the American public.

In order to free their hands of questions of legality in building a so called national missile defense system, the President broke the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty-abandoning an arms control agreement that has cut nuclear arsenals capable of reaching the U.S. by 57 percent. Because of the ABM Treaty, there are far fewer ballistic missiles today than 15 years ago, and fewer nations trying to develop them. However, by breaking away from this treaty, moving forward with missile defense plans, and developing a new Nuclear Posture Review, the Bush Administration is heading down a path that will surely lead our country, and the world toward a new round of nuclear proliferation.

On May 10th, the House passed the FY 2003 Defense Authorization bill, which authorizes \$7.8 billion on the Missile Defense Program next year. Spending \$8 billion this year on a system that does not work and is nowhere near completion reaches beyond irresponsibility into the realm of absurdity.

It seems to me that the current Administration and the Republicans in Congress believe that by throwing billions of dollars into this program, it will magically become an effective system. It is a SHEILD OF DREAMS; they believe that if we build it, it will work. But one failure after another tells a different story.

On June 13, the Administration plans to break ground on 5 new missile silos for missile interceptors in Greely, Alaska. Yet, the Missile Defense Agency has yet to even complete a Testing and Evaluation Master Plan, a Program Implementation Plan, or an Operational Requirements Document. In other words, the Administration is spending billions of precious taxpayer dollars on a program that they haven't even figured out how to test.

In exempting the Missile Defense Agency from Operational Requirements Documents, Secretary Donald Rumsfeld is allowing the Pentagon to work on a secret plan, giving little or no knowledge to Congress or the American public. This White House is ready to

shield the truth from the American people and Congress-- that this is a wasteful, unrealistic, defense contractor assistance program that continues to fail.

For the past two decades, conservatives like President Bush have worked to put every domestic assistance program under the microscope: unemployment and workers compensation, Head Start, TANF, and Medicaid. They worked to ensure that programs designed to help regular people are scrutinized and monitored, no matter the cost. In the same breath, they spend billions on a missile defense system that doesn't work, and provides a false sense of security for the American people.

The truth is, the President and this Administration have used September 11th to cover up many unilateral decisions made without public knowledge and understanding, and without congressional consent. The Administration has operated under a veil of secrecy. They have moved to implement policies beneath the radar of the American people. But Mr. President, we can see through your shroud and we will not let this Administration destroy the progress we've made on fulfilling the priorities that Americans have repeatedly asked their government to fulfill.