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**SCHAKOWSKY JOINS BIPARTISAN EFFORT
TO RESCIND BUSH ORDER THAT GREATLY
RESTRICTS PUBLIC ACCESS TO PRESIDENTIAL RECORD**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - During a Government Reform Committee hearing today, U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) said, "The more the public knows about how its government works, the stronger the government, and the safer our democracy." Schakowsky delivered her remarks today during a committee hearing on President Bush's Executive Order that greatly limits the public's access to Presidential records.

Schakowsky, who is the ranking Democrats on the Government Efficiency Subcommittee, is the author of bipartisan legislation to rescind that order. Other chief sponsors of the legislation include U.S. Representative Henry Waxman (D-IL) and Government Efficiency Subcommittee Chairman Steve Horn (R-CA)

"The Bush Executive Order is not about protecting state secrets or homeland security. Those concerns are already addressed in the law. Rather, this Executive order allows the Bush administration to lock away documents that would reveal how Presidents Reagan and George H. W. Bush handled affairs in Afghanistan. This Executive Order can be used to make sure the rest of the Iran-Contra story is never told," Schakowsky said during the hearing.

She asked, "What is it about the advice the President's advisors are putting forward that they don't want the public to know? Did the President and his advisors have conversations about Enron that would damage his reputation if they became public? Have his advisors told the President that his tax cut benefits the wealthy while endangering Social Security trust fund? Are the President's advisors telling him that they have developed an energy policy that will fatten the wallets of his oil buddies in Texas? If so, I can understand why they would want their advice kept secret."

The full text of Schakowsky's Government Reform Committee hearing statement follows:

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I look forward to the testimony from this distinguished panel of experts.

Last November, President Bush tried to subvert the intent of Congress when it passed the Presidential Records Act. Today we begin the process of undoing that subversion. I am pleased that we have worked together to produce a bipartisan bill that addresses public access to presidential records.

The Presidential Records Act was passed by Congress in 1978 to assure that

Presidential Records, created at the expense of the public, became available to the public 12 years after the President left office. This law was designed to inhibit the kind of secrecy and dirty tricks that characterized the Nixon reelection campaign. If officials know their acts will become a matter of public record in the future, Congress reasoned, they would alter their behavior today. If officials know their acts will become a matter of public record in the future, President Bush reasons, they won't speak honestly. I find that formulation troubling.

What is it about the advice the President's advisors are putting forward that they don't want the public to know? Did the President and his advisors have conversations about Enron that would damage his reputation if they became public? Have his advisors told the President that his tax cut benefits the wealthy while endangering Social Security trust fund? Are the President's advisors telling him that they have developed an energy policy that will fatten the wallets of his oil buddies in Texas? If so, I can understand why they would want their advice kept secret. However, if the President's advisors are giving him their honest opinion about what is best for the country, I don't understand why they would want to hide. The opinion of the President's advisors is generally well known.

The Bush Executive Order permits an incumbent president to block the release of papers from a former administration, even if that president has asked that the papers be released.

The Bush Executive Order allows a former president to claim executive privilege to block the release of documents without any independent review of the legitimacy of that claim. The order even allows a former President's family to make this claim after the President's death.

The Bush Executive Order is not about protecting state secrets or homeland security. Those concerns are already addressed in the law. Rather, this Executive order allows the Bush administration to lock away documents that would reveal how Presidents Reagan and George H. W. Bush handled affairs in Afghanistan. This Executive Order can be used to make sure the rest of the Iran-Contra story is never told.

The more the public knows about how its government works, the stronger the government, and the safer our democracy. This attempt to undo the Presidential Records Act is one more act by this administration to close the curtain between the government and the public - an act Congress cannot allow to continue.