

MARCH 21, 2002

**HOUSE DEMOCRATS CALL ON HOMELAND SECURITY DIRECTOR RIDGE TO TESTIFY BEFORE CONGRESS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Democratic Homeland Security Task Force member Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and House Democrats called on President Bush to allow Tom Ridge to testify before Congress as soon as possible. In a letter to President Bush, the members wrote, *"We hope you will agree that a systematic dialogue with Congress between the Office of Homeland Security and Members of the House of Representatives - in the form of testimony as well as closed briefings - is every bit as important as Director Ridge's ongoing discussion with the many Federal agencies whose budgets he is impacting."* □ □

So far, President Bush has refused requests by the House and Senate to permit Ridge to come before Congressional committees. □ Below is the full text of the letter.

*March 21, 2002*

*Dear Mr. President:* □

*We write respectfully to request that you ask Tom Ridge, Director of the Office of Homeland Security, to testify as soon as possible before the U.S. House of Representatives. It simply is not viable to have no protocol or systematic manner for Members of the House - the elected Representatives of the American people - to receive regular communications and important homeland defense information from Mr. Ridge's office.* □

*The recent Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS) was delivered to House Democrats via White House staff to the Democratic Caucus. While we did appreciate getting this information, Members were not able to ask questions of any administration official about the document, either in open or closed session. Homeland security is too critical a national issue for an announcement on the new HSAS, or other important homeland security issues that are sure to arise, to be delivered by White House staff as pamphlets.* □

*House Members have an excellent sense of local prevention and response capabilities and will be counted on by local officials and the Federal Government alike to provide leadership and serve as a liaison with urban and rural communities with regard to biological, chemical, nuclear, radiological and other terrorist threats.* □

*We hope you will agree that a systematic dialogue with Congress between the Office of Homeland Security and Members of the House of Representatives - in the form of testimony as well as closed briefings - is every bit as important as Director Ridge's*

*ongoing discussion with the many Federal agencies whose budgets he is impacting. As has been noted, Mr. Ridge's job is more than that of a Presidential advisor, and therefore formal interaction with Congress by way of testimony is justified.*

*In the interest of providing the best homeland security for all Congressional Districts, we urge you to ask the Homeland Security Director to testify before the House of Representatives as soon as possible. We look forward to hearing from you on this matter of great importance to all Americans.*