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SCHAKOWSKY INTRODUCES BILL TO BUILD ON LAST YEAR'S LEGISLATIVE VICTORY

EXPANDING PROTECTION FOR BATTERED IMMIGRANT WOMEN

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) introduced the Battered Immigrant Family Relief Act of 2001, bipartisan legislation to expand protection for battered immigrant women.

"Violence against women is a profound and extremely pervasive problem, striking across economic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and across all age groups. It is an epidemic that affects not only women, but children and families as well," Schakowsky said.

The Battered Immigrant Family Relief Act of 2001 would allow battered and abused immigrant women to safely escape their abusers without fear of deportation or other negative immigration consequences. It would also provide a safety net for battered legal immigrants and their children by allowing them access to health insurance, food, and other benefits required to escape their abuser. More specifically, this legislation includes:

1. Access to Legal Immigration Status to:

- **Elderly Immigrant Victims Abused by their Citizen or Permanent Resident, son or daughter**

- **Individuals Abused as Children by a Citizen or Permanent Resident Parent**

2. Access to Certain Public Benefits Immigrants Need to Escape Their Abuser:

- **Medicaid**

- **Food Stamps**

- **TANF and SSI**

3. Access to Legal Services Corporation Assistance

"There are still battered immigrants, like asylees and the elderly, who are forced to remain in abusive relationships, unable to appeal for protection from law enforcement and the courts for fear of deportation. We can no longer allow immigration status to be used as a tool of control in abusive situations," Schakowsky said

Last Congress, Schakowsky was successful in expanding the rights of battered and abused immigrant women. She introduced the Battered Immigrant Women's Protection Act, HR 3083, in November of 1999, and major provisions of her bill were included in the Violence Against Women Act reauthorization Act, a bill to increase federal assistance to women fleeing domestic violence. Major provisions specifically dealing with battered immigrants that became law are:

- Abused self-petitioners are allowed to apply for adjustment of status and remain in the US throughout the entire process. Previously, battered immigrants had to leave the US to obtain their final papers. Once they left the country, however, orders of protection became mute, placing their lives in potential danger again.

- The creation of U visa that is available for up to 10,000 immigrant victims of certain crimes each year who cooperate in the investigation or prosecution of the perpetrators. This visa provides work authorization to the victims and certain family members and allows most of them to adjust to Legal Permanent Residence status after 3 years.

"We, in Congress, should be proud that we were able to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act last session. I was particularly pleased with the inclusion of critical provisions of relief to battered immigrant women that came from my bill, HR 3083, the Battered Immigrant Women Protection Act. However, there are still important groups that were left out of last year's negotiations. That is why the Battered Immigrant Family Relief Act of 2001 is so critical."