

FEBRUARY 4, 2002

SCHAKOWSKY AND STATE LEGISLATORS ANNOUNCE PLAN TO FORCE GOVERNOR TO ACCEPT FREE OFFER FROM FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO STOCKPILE POTASSIUM IODIDE PILLS

PILLS SAVE LIVES IN CASE OF ACCIDENT OR ATTACK ON NUCLEAR FACILITIES

CHICAGO, IL -U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today vowed to work in Congress and with state legislators to reverse Governor Ryan's irresponsible decision that keeps life-saving potassium iodide pills away from Illinois families living within ten miles of nuclear facilities. The federal government has offered to provide Illinois, free of charge, these pills that help insulate the thyroid gland from absorbing dangerous radioactive substances, such as Iodine 131, that may cause cancer. Governor Ryan has so far rejected the offer.

Last month, Schakowsky urged Ryan to include potassium iodide pills in his comprehensive nuclear accident/attack response plan. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission recently issued a rule requiring all states with reactors to consider the use of the pills. Arizona, Alabama, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts and Tennessee have already accepted the offer and are stockpiling potassium iodide.

"The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued a warning that Al Qaeda operatives here in the United States may be planning attacks on any of the 103 nuclear energy sites. Illinois is the most nuclear state in the country. Governor Ryan, what could be your motivation for refusing to give Illinois families a small, but essential, measure of protection in case our worst fears come true?" Schakowsky asked.

"I don't understand why the Governor and his experts oppose the stockpiling of potassium iodide pills. They argue that the people of Illinois would feel a false sense of security. They think that families would actually stick around if a major nuclear disaster, like Chernobyl or Three Mile Island, ever takes place. They must not 'trust' the people of Illinois. I say to the Governor: Give the people of Illinois some credit. They're going to take their pills and head for the hills," Schakowsky added.

At a news conference in Chicago, Schakowsky said she will work to pass H.R.3279, common sense federal legislation that would require states to ensure that homes and public facilities within 50 miles of nuclear power plants are provided with potassium iodide pills. Illinois State Representatives Mary K. O'Brien, Harry Osterman, Julie Hamos, and Sara Feigenholtz and State Senator Carol Ronen, who joined Schakowsky at the event, announced their intentions to introduce comparable legislation in the state legislature.

Dr. Arthur Schneider, a member of the American Thyroid Association, also attended the

news conference, and spoke of the invaluable and effective protection potassium iodide pills would provide to the thyroid in case of exposure to radioactive materials.

"Scientific evidence is clear on this subject: if you take your pill a few hours after being exposed to radioactive materials, your chances of developing thyroid cancer are slim," said Schakowsky.

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She pointed to data gathered following the Chernobyl reactor accident.□ According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), more than 1,000 children suffered from thyroid cancer following the accident in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. But Poland did not see this dramatic rise in the number of cases because officials distributed potassium iodide pills to millions of adults and children following the disaster.□ □

For 130 mg potassium iodide pills, the FDA recommends that□ adults 18 and older and women who are pregnant take one pill; children between the ages of 3 and 18 be given $\frac{1}{2}$ a pill; children under the age of 3 be given $\frac{1}{4}$ pill; and children under one month old be given $\frac{1}{8}$ of a pill. The FDA has concluded that side effects associated with potassium iodide are minor and uncommon.

"It is negligent of the Governor to turn down the federal government's free offer of potassium iodide pills, especially at a time like this.□ These pills would help save thousands of lives and no one in Illinois living near a nuclear power plant should be without them," Schakowsky concluded.