

DECEMBER 13, 2001

SCHAKOWSKY: H.R. 1, THE FIRST STEP ON THE ROAD TO EDUCATION REFORM

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) said today that H.R. 1, the Better Education for Students and Teachers Act, is *"a strong, positive step toward a new education system that focuses on preparing our youth to make our world the best it can be."*

□ H.R. 1, a comprehensive education reform legislation, was adopted overwhelming by the House.□□

Below is Schakowsky's Congressional Record statement:

"Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1, the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.□□ I support this bill because it reauthorizes a broad array of targeted programs that work toward improving public education.□ It focuses on maintaining high standards in every classroom, strengthening teacher and principal quality, supporting a safe, healthy, disciplined, and drug-free learning environment and improving student performance.□□

"H.R. 1 will help to close the gap between disadvantaged children and their more affluent peers, and between minority and non-minority students. The conference report includes unprecedented targeting of Title I funds to the neediest communities. The 50 school districts with the highest percentage of poor students will receive a 10% increase in Title I funding solely as a result of proposed Title I formula grants. In addition, Title I schools will receive more funds due to increases in appropriations. Congress, and the country at-large, cannot continue to ignore the gap between rich and poor and minority and non-minority students. This bill represents a fight against the status quo.

"H.R. 1 will ensure that all teachers are qualified to teach in the subject matter for which they are responsible. The bill includes an authorization of \$3.2 billion for teacher training and class-size reduction, a \$1 billion (or 46%) increase from the FY 2001 funding level.□ It provides new resources for mentoring, training, salary enhancement and other improvements.□ We are supporting teachers by giving them the resources they need to do their jobs. Our teachers will now be better prepared to give students the tools and know-how to be successful students.

"H.R. 1 includes a historical 57% funding increase in bilingual education programs.□ For the first time ever, our education legislation has recognized that this country is growing closer and closer to our creed, E Pluribus Unum, "Out of Many, One".□ This bill will ensure that language barriers will not leave our many immigrant and bilingual children behind.

"Additionally, H.R. 1 contains no vouchers, no state block grants, and no repeal of

after-school programs and a section was added for school construction. The bill also kept hate crimes programs and civil rights protections. Efforts to hold schools accountable without providing the resources and protections needed to meet high standards were defeated.

"I contacted major disability groups, such as, The Arc and the Easter Seal Society. These groups expressed their disappointment in the loss of IDEA funding. The NEA, AFT, and NSBA offered similar opinions on the bill. All three groups also express disappointment that Congress could not agree to fulfill its promise to fully-fund IDEA at 40%. Congress made a commitment 26 years ago to fund federally mandated special education programs at 40 percent of average per pupil expenditures. By simply fulfilling our promise to fully fund our share of IDEA, Congress could improve public education three-fold. First, school districts would have substantial resources freed up for other essential or innovative educational programs. Second, we would remove the unpredictability of the annual appropriations process, replacing confusion with stability for local schools when formulating their budgets. And last but not least--we would be giving special education students the tools needed to overcome the many obstacles they face on a daily basis. Despite this shortcoming, these groups support the goals of raising achievement, increasing accountability, and improving teacher quality, and I agree with them.

"I believe the education of the 21st century must change to suit different learning styles and include a wider variety of programming that focuses on the application of classroom lessons--math, science, social sciences-- to real world situations. Too often, lessons are taught in a way that makes it difficult to connect book lessons to the real world; we must better bridge this gap. In a world that evolves more closely everyday, 2nd language classes should be encouraged at early ages. We simply must ensure that our education system keeps up with our world. We are in a critical transition stage; new techniques, new ideas, and new visions must be the order of the day, in order for our students to remain competitive."

"We have the opportunity to uncap a wealth of human resources that lay under-appreciated and underestimated in urban and rural school districts across the country. The next generation of great thinkers, writers, scientists, doctors, educators, actors and lawmakers, are waiting for us to activate and motivate them. It is our responsibility to devise a new definition of success. We must let our students know that our future is nothing without them. It is our responsibility to show them that there is a world that they can--not only be a part of--but also change and improve. If we invest in our students, we invest in a future of innovation and growth. The H.R. 1 conference agreement is a strong, positive step toward a new education system that focuses on preparing our youth to make our world the best it can be. I urge all my colleagues to support the passage of this conference report."