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NATIONAL ID CARD NOT THE ANSWER TO ENSURING OUR SECURITY

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), former House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-GA), and the ACLU agreed today that a national identification card is not an effective measure to ensure our nation's security.□□

"The security measures we propose in response to terrorism must pass three tests: Are they effective?□ Can they be applied without discrimination?□ Can they be implemented without sacrificing our fundamental freedoms of due process, privacy, and equality?" Schakowsky asked today during a hearing of the Government Reform Subcommittee on Government Efficiency, Financial Management, and Intergovernmental Relations.□□□

Schakowsky, who is the ranking Democrat on the Subcommittee, concluded, "The proposal for a national identification system is not new.□ It has failed in the past because it cannot pass these fundamental tests."□

Below is Schakowsky's statement from today's hearing.

"In the wake of September 11, we are faced with the challenge of balancing the need for enhanced national security with the need for protecting the civil rights of the public.□ In the past, some efforts in the name of national security have gone too far and have endangered those liberties.□ We have learned that once that kind of harm is done it is difficult to repair.□□

"During World War II we uprooted thousands of Japanese -Americans and placed them in internment camps.□ The internment was a mistake.□ In fact, it was clear at the time that there was no danger of sabotage from those individuals.□ As historian Margo Anderson points out, in November 1941, in response to a request by President Roosevelt, John Franklin Carter wrote to the President 'There is no Japanese "problem" on the coast.□ There will be no armed uprising of Japanese....'

□ Nonetheless, thousands of Japanese-Americans, many of whom were citizens, were rounded up and placed in camps.□ Today we have a monument to those who were mistreated just North of the Senate office buildings, and our government has officially apologized.□ However, getting to that apology and the monument was extremely difficult and did not repair the harm done.□ The liberty and sense of security lost by those interned cannot be given back.□ We must be careful not to repeat the mistakes of the past.□

"Last week, on the Thursday before Veterans Day, I went to the floor of the House to pay tribute to those who have served our country in the defense of freedom.□ We have fought hard throughout our history to maintain a free and open society.□ We must not sacrifice

those freedoms in the name of war. If we sacrifice our freedom, we lose the war no matter what the military outcome.

"The security measures we propose in response to terrorism must pass the three tests: Are they effective? Can they be applied without discrimination? Can they be implemented without sacrificing our fundamental freedoms of due process, privacy, and equality? The proposal for a national identification system is not new. It has failed in the past because it cannot pass these fundamental tests."

"When Representative Gingrich was Speaker of the House, the Congress passed an Immigration Reform Act, which contained a number of provisions that would have led to a national identification system. Since that law was passed in 1996, those provisions have been steadily paired back. One provision was repealed, and another modified to the point where it could not be administered at any land border between the United States and its neighbors. In the Patriot Act, the House reaffirmed those provisions, knowing that they had no teeth.

"The events of September 11 show us that systems like national identification cards will not deter the crazed terrorist from his or her mission. Those terrorists all had driver's licenses, credit cards, and Internet accounts.

"We must pay close attention to the effects any proposal will have on the fundamental freedoms on which this country was founded - freedom of speech and religion, freedom to assembly and freedom of the press, freedom from unreasonable search and seizure, and freedom from imprisonment with out due process. Those freedoms cannot be ignored."

"As members of Congress we must evaluate any proposal offered in the name of enhanced security. First, does the proposal in fact do what it claims to do? Second, what is the burden on the public in terms of time consumed and freedom lost? Third, do the benefits outweigh the costs -- is there an incremental gain in security and does it justify the loss of freedoms?"