

NOVEMBER 8, 2001

**SCHAKOWSKY FIGHTS IDENTITY THEFT BY TERRORISTS AND CRIMINALS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), who authored legislation last year to protect consumers against identity theft, expressed urgency in addressing this growing crime especially in the wake of the September 11 attack.

Schakowsky issued the following statement during a hearing of the Financial Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations and Ways & Means Subcommittee on Social Security.

*"The FBI states that identity theft has become the fastest growing crime in America with 1,700 complaints a week and somewhere between 350,000 and 500,000 individuals per year falling victim to this crime.[] []"*

*"The terrorist attacks on our nation on September 11th revealed disturbing realities about our nation's security systems and the ease by which criminals can obtain false identities and documents.[] I am particularly disturbed with the ease the terrorists entered, exited, and moved about the country.[] The INS and other authorities still can not track how 6 of the 19 hijackers entered the country.[] []"*

*"I am further appalled at the level of opportunism some criminals demonstrate.[] There have already been three people indicted for using the identities of people who perished in the World Trade Center terrorist attacks.[] One of the men indicted is said to have gotten an American Express card and tried to obtain a \$750,000 mortgage under the name of a man who died on Flight 175, which crashed into the World Trade Center.[] According to the authorities, it is commonplace that identity thieves prey upon those who have recently deceased.[] []"*

*"Since Congress passed the Federal Identity Theft Law in 1998, the dramatic increase in identity theft can be attributed to the Internet, advanced computer graphics, and other technological advances and upgrades.[] We must find ways to use this technology to our advantage.[] I also introduced broad and comprehensive consumer rights legislation last Congress that included provisions to expand consumer protections against identity fraud.[] We also recently passed legislation that seeks to curtail the usage of false identification in establishing financial accounts.[] []"*

*"We must remain vigilant in overseeing the effectiveness of the laws we pass and creating new laws to stop both terrorists and criminals."*