

NOVEMBER 7, 2001

**HOUSE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
ELECTION REFORM RELEASES COMPREHENSIVE REPORT ON VOTING SYSTEM**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Vice Chair of the Democratic Caucus Special Committee on Election Reform, issued the following statement on the release of the Committee's comprehensive report on election reform. Schakowsky is the author of H.R. 1004, the Provisional Voting Rights Act of 2001. The bill permits individuals whose names do not appear on registration list to vote after written affirmation before an election official at the polling place; calls for provisional votes to be transferred immediately to an appropriate official for verification; and requires that provisional votes be counted unless the state or local election officials can prove that those voters should not be allowed to cast their votes.

"Last December, after the disaster of the 2000 election, no American could have imagined that nearly a year later Congress would still have not taken any action to fix our election system. No one would have thought that after the disenfranchisement of millions of voters, the federal government would do nothing to reform the system.

"Democrats have been calling for action since last year and have been working since then to pass meaningful reform. We have concrete proposals, including mine, the Provisional Voting Rights Act, which would guarantee the right to vote to all eligible Americans, and others like the Equal Protection Voting Rights Act, H.R. 1170, by Representative John Conyers.

"Democrats, under the leadership of Maxine Waters, Chair of the Democratic Caucus Special Committee on Election Reform, held hearings throughout the country, not just in Florida, but in places like Chicago, Los Angeles, San Antonio, and Philadelphia. We heard from real people and real voters who told similar stories of frustration and disenfranchisement. We have responded with a comprehensive report that is a blueprint to rebuild our election system and restore the voters' trust. The report recommends minimum national standards in areas such as provisional balloting, purging of voter lists, accessibility for seniors, persons with disabilities, and the visually impaired, bilingual voting, and election day voter registration databases.

"Last May, in Chicago, the Committee held a hearing that was attended by hundreds of voters who could not wait to tell us about their experiences. Maxiella Donahoe, a would be first time voter expressed her disappointment in a system that failed her miserably. She said:

I was very excited since this was going to be my first presidential election to vote in. I never had the opportunity to vote. I can't even explain how upset I was.

"We must act now to address the glaring, documented shortcomings of the last election. For the sake of Maxiella and the millions of disenfranchised voters from the 2000 election, we must pass comprehensive reforms this session. Time is running short. The 2002 election is only a year away."