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SCHAKOWSKY URGES AGGRESSIVE SAFETY MEASURES FOR POSTAL WORKERS AND CONSUMERS

WASHINGTON, D.C. - During a Government Reform hearing, U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) called on the federal government to take aggressive measures to ensure the safety and security of postal workers and consumers.□□

□ Below is Schakowsky's statement before the Committee:

"Since October 4, with the first case of the recent wave of anthrax in this country, it has become clear that we need to take serious measures to protect the American public from biological threats.□ With anthrax having been sent through the mail to numerous locations here in Washington as well as New Jersey, New York, and Florida, it is clear that our immediate efforts need to focus on ways to safeguard the postal system in the United States.□□

"We need to act aggressively to protect our letter carriers and all postal workers from additional threats and we need to ensure America that the postal service will continue to function and to function safely.□ To do so will require support from the federal government so that the postal service has the tools that it needs to safeguard the mail, mail facilities, and most importantly, postal workers and the consumers they serve.□

"It is hard enough for postal workers in my district to brave the brutal Chicago weather in order to get their job done.□ They should not have to go to work wondering if their job might endanger their life.□ It is up to all of us and to the management at the Postal Service to put systems and safeguards in place immediately so that postal workers can do their jobs with confidence and peace of mind.□ That means installing new equipment, providing interim protection to workers, and giving clear, timely information to postal employees and customers.□

"And, of course, we need to be able to guarantee the safety of the mail to our constituents who have mail delivered to their homes every day.□ I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about the steps being taken toward that end, and how the Congress can be of assistance.□

"I want to pay tribute to the postal workers throughout this country who are still going to work every day.□ The mail is a critical part of our economy and our every day life and we appreciate your service.□ I know how saddened the postal family is over the loss of life resulting from contaminated mail and we all share that sadness and sympathy for the victims and their families.□□

"I also want to thank postal employees for the heightened level of scrutiny with which

mail is being treated. In the last two weeks, I have had letters destined for my district offices flagged because they were suspicious. In each case, postal employees called my staff to make them aware of the situation, confirmed whether or not the correspondence was expected, and took additional steps to ensure the safety of those parcels. My staff and I very much appreciate those efforts."