

JUNE 18, 2001

**STATEMENT OF VICE CHAIR JAN SCHAKOWSKY
DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON ELECTION REFORM
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), a Vice Chair of the Democratic Caucus Special Committee on Election Reform, issued the following statement.

"On June 8, 2001, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights voted to approve its long-awaited report on the Presidential vote in Florida. The Commission concluded that 'injustice, ineptitude and inefficiency' best describes what occurred in Florida last November. Specifically, the Commission found that countless voters were disenfranchised, the majority of whom were African Americans.

"While it is no surprise that the Commission would also harshly criticize the governor of Florida, the Secretary of State, and other Florida officials, I believe we must learn from the past and work to bring justice and fairness to our election process. That is why the work of the Democratic Caucus Special Committee on Election Reform is so valuable. Through the testimony of voters, experts, civic leaders and local elected officials in Jacksonville, Chicago, and across the country, we can amass a record that will help us craft comprehensive reform for our election laws. We will also use this valuable record to convince President Bush, who did not include any money in his budget for election reform, to support federal funding to help localities and states in their efforts to ensure that every voter and every vote is counted.

"Before the Supreme Court selected a U.S. President, I was in Florida meeting with voters and listening to their stories. African American voters told me that they had to face many hurdles before they were allowed to cast their ballot. Elderly Jewish women were grief stricken because they had wanted to vote for Al Gore and Joe Lieberman. Others told me that they were refused assistance, harassed, or simply turned away. And in Philadelphia and my hometown of Chicago, I've heard from many other disenfranchised voters. I will work with members of this Committee and my colleagues in Congress to ensure that we will never hear those stories again."

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 a voting registration list to vote after affirming their right to vote; calls for provisional votes to be transferred immediately for verification; and requires that provisional votes be counted unless the state can prove that those voters should not be allowed to cast their votes.