

MAY 19, 2001

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

**CHICAGO, IL -- Vice Chair Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today welcomed the Democratic Caucus Special Committee on Election Reform to Chicago. The Committee held a hearing attended by 200 voters in Kasbeer Hall at Loyola University's Chicago campus.**

**Schakowsky is the author of the Provisional Voting Rights Act of 2001, H.R. 1004. The legislation would guarantee that no registered voter would be turned away at the polls. The following is Schakowsky's statement:**

***"I wish to welcome my colleagues on the Democratic Caucus Special Committee on Election Reform to the great city of Chicago. I also want to thank our distinguished guests, speakers, and community representatives for coming out on a Saturday to join us at today's hearing. And to the voters who are here this morning, your stories, input, and suggestions will serve our mission to reform our election system to ensure accuracy and fairness for all voters."***

***"This past election has clearly demonstrated to the nation that severe deficiencies exist in voting procedures and technologies. More shocking, voters on November 7, 2000 were penalized for no fault of their own. We know that without change, we are destined for another Florida fiasco and an election decided by the Judicial Branch and not the electorate. And if we fail to take charge and bring about real reforms, votes will not be counted and minority voters will be turned away from the polling place. They will be unfairly targeted, and they will not be allowed to fully exercise their constitutional rights. And without action, persons with disabilities will continue to be denied access to the polling place."***

***"That is why we must deliver to our citizens a system that guarantees that no eligible voter will be turned away, shut out, or discriminated against on election day. The goal of the Committee is to learn from you, voters, experts, local elected officials and community leaders, about the mistakes of the 2000 election and to then present to Congress a report that is balanced, focused, and accurate, which will lead to comprehensive election reform legislation that I hope Congress will pass and the President will sign into law before November 2002."***

***"In Chicago and Cook County, more than 70% of registered voters went to the polls the last presidential election. Unfortunately, Chicago had the most error-ridden presidential election last fall of any major U.S. city, with 123,000 uncounted ballots. Since then, local officials have begun the process of reforming their election system through stepped up voter education and ballot redesign. And the Illinois State House passed legislation to***

*help localities purchase voting equipment that identifies voting errors.*

*"I am very pleased that Illinois is one of states that is leading the nation in election reform. However, I believe that the federal government can expand current law and set national standards in areas such as provisional voting, voter identification, and purging of voter lists, among other issues. With your help, this Committee will craft meaningful election reform legislation to ensure that every vote counts."*

Schakowsky's legislation, H.R. 1004, permits individuals whose names do not appear on a voting registration list to vote after written affirmation before an election official at the polling place; calls for provisional votes to be transferred immediately for verification; and requires that provisional votes be counted unless officials can prove that those voters should not be allowed to cast their votes.