

APRIL 11, 2001

U.S. HOUSE DEMOCRATIC LEADER GEPHARDT, SCHAKOWSKY RALLY CHICAGOANS AGAINST BUSH BUDGET

CHICAGO, IL -- U.S. House of Representatives Democratic Leader Dick Gephardt and U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today rallied Chicagoans against President Bush's budget proposal.

Hundreds of people from area senior, labor, and environmental organizations attended the rally to oppose the Bush Budget plan that threatens Social Security and Medicare, fails to provide seniors with prescription drug coverage, and does not meet domestic priorities. Instead, this budget plan guarantees a tax cut to the top 1% of taxpayers.

The rally was organized by First Things First Coalition. The coalition, which calls on Congress and the Administration to meet budget priorities before tax cuts to the rich, includes AFSCME Council 31, Chicago Federation of Labor, Citizen Action/Illinois, NAACP, NOW, Illinois AFL-CIO, UNITE!, SEIU Illinois and others.

Representative Schakowsky's statement follows:

"At about 10:15 on Monday morning, a copy of President Bush's budget was delivered to my office. And like they say in Houston, we've got a problem."

"If you're a senior, you've got a problem. If you rely on public housing, you've got a problem. If you want to breathe clean air and drink clean water, you've got a problem. And if you want to be safe in your own neighborhood, you've got a big problem."

"This Republican President goes before the American people and says that he's increasing federal spending by 4%. I say: Mr. President, why don't you tell us the whole the story? Why don't you tell the American people that you're going to increase defense spending and a few other select programs that benefit the rich, special interests and big business, so you can spend much less on programs that help so many people, in so many ways."

"Why don't you tell the American people that domestic discretionary spending on things like environmental protection, AIDS treatment grants, health care and farm programs doesn't even keep pace with inflation? Why don't you tell the American people you're doing this so you can stick to your campaign promise of a tax cut to the rich at any cost? We want to hear the whole truth."

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"Do you know that in President Bush's budget, Social Security and Medicare - and I say this in honor of another Republican Newt Gingrich -- will wither on the vine. He wants to squander \$600 billion of your Social Security money and \$153 billion of your Medicare

money so his rich friends can drive brand new Lexus luxury cars. And that's the truth.

"During the Campaign, with a straight face, candidate Bush said he wants to add a prescription drug benefit to Medicare. President Bush gives us a budget that leaves you out if you earn less than \$11,600 as an individual or \$15,700 for couples. You're on your own to pay excessive drug prices. But if you're in the top 1% of taxpayers, you're going to get a total of \$770 billion over the next ten years in tax cuts. And that's the truth.

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"What about the thousands of Chicago families who depend on some help from the federal government for safe and affordable housing? They're ignored in this budget. This budget threatens the safety and security of 1.3 million families nationwide by cutting public housing repair funds by \$700 million. President Bush even gets rid of the public housing Drug Elimination Programs. And the Community Development Block Grant Program that provides development funds for low and moderate-income communities - forget about it. It's cut by \$516 million and that's the truth.

"Those same families will see less money for child care assistance under the Bush budget. We'll spend \$319 million this year to provide child care under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Supplemental Grants - that money is gone in the Bush budget. How compassionate is that? But that's what he does and that's the truth.

"As for the environment and energy, this President cuts, cuts and cuts some more. He slashes \$25.4 million from EPA's overall air program. I guess he wants the whole country to experience the same environmental mess he left behind in Texas. And he'd rather drill our way out of this energy crunch than invest in critical and promising research in solar, wind, and hydroelectric energy. He actually cuts that important research by 50%. And that's the truth.

"Now let me ask you this. After hearing the truth and having all the facts, do you think President Bush, the education president, will stick to his promise of leaving no child behind? Of course he won't. His education budget eliminates all \$1.2 billion of funding for school renovation programs. Plenty of school children, including yours, will be left behind to study and learn in buildings not fit for our future leaders. And that's the truth.

"President Bush is wrong on taxes, wrong on the budget, and wrong on his priorities. Instead of rewarding the rich with a tax cut, he should use surplus dollars to make sound investments for America's future in education, health care, and housing, and not cut programs that work and that people support, like community policing, public housing, health care and environmental protection.

"This budget is a far cry from accomplishing what we know is right and what you, the people of this country, tell us is right. It's going to be a battle, but we've defined the problem, have the truth on our side, and we're going to win, win, win."