

APRIL 5, 2001

**SCHAKOWSKY, CONYERS INTRODUCE BILL CALLING ON CONGRESS TO PASS  
UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE BILL BY 2004**

**LEGISLATION IS FIRST ACTION OF NEWLY CREATED CONGRESSIONAL UNIVERSAL  
HEALTH CARE TASK FORCE**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today announced that she has been named a Co-chair of the newly created Congressional Universal Health Care Task Force. The Task Force, which has 44 members, is committed to making sure that every person has access to comprehensive, affordable and high quality health care. Representative John Conyers chairs the Task Force. Representatives John Tierney, Donna Christensen and Barbara Lee are also Co-chairs.

In its first action, the Task Force introduced the Conyers-Schakowsky bill, which directs Congress to enact universal health care legislation by October 2004. In the meantime, the Task Force will work for improvements in health care that move toward that goal.

Representative Schakowsky's statement follows:

"I am proud to join with my colleagues in the launch of the Universal Health Care Task Force and to reaffirm my commitment to providing every person with access to comprehensive, affordable and high quality health care."

"Our nation continues to lead the world in the amount of money we spend on health care, but we continue to lag behind much of the rest of the world in meeting the health needs of our people."

"During one of the most prosperous times in our history, 43 million Americans, including 10 million children, are uninsured. Millions of others are poorly insured. Over 13 million "insured" senior citizens lack prescription drug benefits. HMO enrollees are not guaranteed that they will get the medical care prescribed by their doctors. Persons with disabilities often are denied the very treatments that they need, and discrimination against mental health services remains widespread. High cost-sharing requirements create insurmountable financial barriers to needed care. Disparities in access to care continue to plague communities of color, as well as underserved rural and urban neighborhoods."

"Unfortunately, the Bush Administration appears to be moving in exactly the wrong direction. Reports are that the President's budget will virtually wipe out community access programs that provide care to the uninsured, slashing \$140 million in funding to \$20 million. At the same time that people living with HIV and AIDS are seeing cutbacks in benefits, the Bush budget fails to increase resources for state-based programs."

**Instead of proposing a Medicare drug benefit available to all beneficiaries, the President's budget would leave out 10 million senior citizens and persons with disabilities. At a time when millions of Americans lack access to care, the Bush budget places a higher priority on giving tax breaks to the richest one percent than on meeting our critical health care needs.**

**"We have a different vision for our country as we enter the new century, one that guarantees that every person enjoys health security.□ We can join the rest of the industrialized world in making health care a right and improving care for all.□ With the support of consumers, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, health care workers and professionals and others, we will create the grassroots momentum needed to get the job done."**