

MARCH 29, 2001

**DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON ELECTION REFORM
ANNOUNCES FIRST
HEARING IN PHILADELPHIA ON APRIL 2**

"MAKING EVERY VOTE COUNT"

VICE CHAIR SCHAKOWSKY SAYS COMMITTEE WILL BE IN CHICAGO IN THE FUTURE

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Democratic Leader Dick Gephardt (MO) and Chair of the Democratic Caucus Special Committee on Election Reform Maxine Waters (D-CA) announced today that the committee will hold its first hearing in Philadelphia on April 2, 2001. U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), a Vice Chair, also announced that additional hearings will be held in cities across the country, including Chicago.

The committee will examine voter disenfranchisement and the election process. Through the testimony of voters, local elected officials, civil rights leaders, and experts, the committee will review voting practices, election laws and registration procedures. The committee will also conduct research into voting methods and irregularities and will analyze the effectiveness of various voting systems. After holding 8 to 10 hearings nationwide in the next three months, the committee will present a comprehensive report to Congress.

"What happened on November 7, 2000 has left us with a looming crisis and that presents a serious threat to our democracy. Disenfranchised voters, who were denied their constitutional right to vote, are demanding accountability from elected officials and that is their right. This committee will move forward with a sense of urgency. We will work to restore the voters' trust back into our system and their faith back into our democracy," Schakowsky said.

"This is the civil rights issue of our day," Schakowsky concluded.

Schakowsky also said that she is looking forward to hearing from voters and experts on provisional voting. She is the author of H.R. 1004, the Provisional Voting Rights Act of 2001. The legislation would ensure that voters are not turned away at the polling place because their names do not appear on the list of registered voters. Specifically, 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.