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**SCHAKOWSKY BLASTS REPUBLICANS FOR ANTI-WORKER VOTE
REPEALING ERGONOMIC STANDARDS & FOR SIDING WITH BIG BUSINESS**

**RELEASES FINDINGS THAT SHOW ILLINOIS' ECONOMY
LOST \$2.3 BILLION DUE TO ERGONOMIC INJURY**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today blasted Republican leaders for willfully siding with big business and for repealing an ergonomics standard that would have helped millions of workers. The rule would have led to 4.6 million fewer injuries and protections for 102 million workers at 6.1 million worksites.

"Working men and women who suffer from repetitive stress injuries, carpal tunnel syndrome, and tendonitis have difficulty accomplishing the simple tasks that we take for granted. They often cannot open a can of soup, cannot comb their hair, and cannot hug their children. Unfortunately, their suffering will continue because of big business and its friends in Congress," Schakowsky said.

A report just released and prepared at the request of the Illinois Democratic Delegation by the minority staff of the House Government Reform Committee found that, in 1998, 26,734 Illinois workers suffered injuries so severe that they missed at least one day of work. Of those injuries, 5,554 workers - more than 1 in 5 - missed more than a month of work. The cost to Illinois' economy was \$2.3 billion in 1998.

Last November, after 10 years of study, 9 weeks of hearings, 11 best practices conferences, 9 months of opportunity for written comment, and years of legislative delays, ergonomic standards were finally issued to prevent injuries. The Joint Resolution of Disapproval overturns last November's standards and prevent the Department of Labor from issuing any similar standard unless specifically authorized by Congress. The Senate approved the Resolution and President Bush has said he will sign it.

Every year, 600,000 workers suffer serious injuries because of ergonomic hazards, the cause of one-third of all serious job-related injuries, half of injuries affecting working women. These injuries cost \$45 to \$50 billion each year in medical expenses, lost wages and lost productivity. The ergonomic standard would have resulted in \$9.1 billion in average annual savings, and \$27,700 savings in direct costs for each injury prevented.

"Real life examples prove that investing in workplace safety prevents injury and saves money. At companies like 3M and the big three auto makers, ergonomic standards have not only helped reduce worker injuries, they have saved money and made the companies more productive. It makes sense for companies to make those investments, but for those who disagree, why not take some of that \$774 billion in tax cuts for the richest

one-percent and use it to improve workplace safety?" Schakowsky said.