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**SCHAKOWSKY, BLAGOJEVICH, & RUSH REPORT FINDS LINK
BETWEEN LACK OF STAFF AND HEALTH VIOLATIONS IN NURSING HOMES**

**84% OF NURSING HOMES FAIL TO MEET MINIMUM STAFFING STANDARDS & HAVE
60% MORE HEALTH AND SAFETY VIOLATIONS**

CHICAGO, IL - U.S. Representatives Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Rod Blagojevich (D-IL), and Bobby Rush (D-IL) today released a report which found that 35,000 nursing home residents in the Chicago area could suffer from serious health problems due to lack of qualified health care staff.□□

"It is not enough for seniors and persons with disabilities in nursing homes to have a roof over their head, a mattress to sleep on, and a once a day look over from a health care professional.□ It is not fair and it is not right. They deserve quality care. This report, the first of its kind in Chicago, is proof positive that understaffed nursing homes offer poor care that is putting residents in danger," Schakowsky said.

Nursing homes that fail to meet staffing levels suggested by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) have, on average, 60% more health and safety violations (4.93 compared to 3.09 violations per home) than those that meet the standards. Federal law does not require nursing homes to staff their facilities at any particular levels.□ Illinois does require minimal staffing ratios, but they are below those recommended by many experts.□□

That is why Schakowsky, Blagojevich and others had introduced the Quality Care for Nursing Home Patients Act to increase the number of qualified and properly trained staff.□□ If enacted the bill would have set minimum administration and staffing ratio standards for nursing homes that receive Medicare and/or Medicaid funding, while requiring that the Health Care Financing Administration provide adequate reimbursement to meet those standards.

□ Schakowsky, who plans to reintroduce comparable legislation this Congress, said,□ "The concept of this bill is simple - nursing homes must hire enough well trained staff to assure quality and prompt care to every resident. Our parents and grandparents deserve to live in dignity."□

The report found that 230 out of 273 Chicago area nursing homes (84%) failed to meet "preferred minimum staffing levels" suggested by HHS. However, to meet those suggested guidelines by HHS, nursing homes must have enough staff to provide each resident with at least 3.45 hours of care each day by both a registered or licensed nurse and a nursing assistant.

The report also found that 200 out of 273 Chicago area nursing homes (73%) failed to meet "lower minimum staffing level" identified by HSS, which is 2.95 hours of care each day by both a registered or licensed nurse and a nursing assistant. These 200 homes serve 31,000 residents.

Schakowsky and her colleagues also wrote to Health and Human Services Secretary-designate Tommy Thompson and House Ways and Means Chairman William Thomas (R-CA) urging them to address this issue in the upcoming year.

"This is a very pivotal issue since more than 40% of 65 year olds will use a nursing home during some time in their lives," Schakowsky said.

Last year, the members released a report that found that 15% of nursing homes in the Chicago area -- more than one out of every seven -- had violations that caused actual harm to residents or placed them at risk of death or serious injury. That report also detailed inadequate staffing conditions and cited an example of a nursing home where a single nurse aide was left to care for an entire floor of 68 residents in the middle of the afternoon. As a result of staff shortages, seniors were left in the same position and in soiled diapers for hours and suffered from bedsores, malnutrition, and a host of other disturbing and preventable ailments.

The 273 nursing homes examined in this report receive \$470 million a year from the federal government to care for residents.