

OCTOBER 24, 2000

DEMOCRATS JOIN PRESIDENT CLINTON AT WHITE HOUSE TO DEMAND FUNDS FOR SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AND MODERNIZATION

SCHAKOWSKY SAYS □ SCHOOLS IN ILLINOIS WOULD BENEFIT UNDER PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today joined her colleagues at a White House event with President Clinton to demand full funding of Democratic school construction and modernization proposals.

Schakowsky issued the below statement following the White House event.

"In June, I, along with many of my colleagues voted against a Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill, in part because it was \$3.5 billion short and well below the President's education request. That bill virtually ignored key education priorities such as reducing class size, modernizing public schools, investing in after school and summer programs, preventing school drug use and violence, closing the digital divide, recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers, and ensuring that college is affordable for all individuals.

□

"It is shortsighted, in this time of unprecedented economic prosperity, for Congress to shortchange our children. □ Instead, we should be reaffirming and strengthening the federal role in education programs by increasing, not decreasing, our investment in public schools, our teachers, and our children. □

"Many may be asking themselves, 'what is preventing the Congress from doing just that?' The simple answer is that Republican leaders have other priorities in mind. □ They'd rather spend billions more funding pet projects instead of major education priorities that will reduce class sizes, repair and modernize public schools, and make college more affordable. □

"Boone School is an elementary school in my district that is struggling with the issues of school overcrowding and deteriorating buildings. □ Last school year, they had 1,100 students in a structure designed to accommodate 800 children. Last spring I returned to Boone School and little had changed. □ Paint was still peeling off the ceilings and classes were still being taught in makeshift classrooms. □ During that visit, a young girl asked me a tough question, which I hope we can answer before this Congress adjourns. □ She asked 'when would she see improvements in her school?'

"In Illinois, close to 90 percent of public schools are in need of upgrades or repairs and with enrollment expected to mushroom in the coming decade, our schools will be pushed to their limits. If we don't address the need now, in ten years we'll have no space

for the over 60,000 students projected to join the over 2.1 million children already in public schools in Illinois. If the President's school modernization priority is funded, Illinois could issue over \$1.2 billion in interest free school construction bonds, which would potentially free up one-half of that amount for further school construction and renovation. Within that \$1.2 billion bonding authority, Chicago would be granted nearly \$538 million in interest-free bonds.

"Funding the President's program is the right thing to do, but it would still be well short of the estimated \$11.3 billion need that currently exists for Illinois's schools. The legislature in Illinois and the City of Chicago are trying to address the enormous need, but they can not do it alone. The federal government must step up to the plate and do its part. The children in Illinois and the nation are waiting.

"It is my hope that the Republicans in Congress will support the President's education priorities and give all children the first rate public education that they deserve."