

**MARCH 30, 2000**

**SCHAKOWSKY JOINS BIPARTISAN GROUP OF HOUSE MEMBERS, IL GOVERNOR RYAN & EXONERATED DEATH ROW INMATE IN SUPPORT OF THE INNOCENCE PROTECTION ACT OF 2000**

**WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today hailed legislation introduced by Representatives Ray LaHood (R-IL) and William Delahunt (D-MA) aimed at saving the lives of innocent people. The Innocence Protection Act of 2000 is a comprehensive package of criminal justice reforms that would reduce the risk of innocent people being executed. Schakowsky is an original cosponsor.**

**Schakowsky joined the sponsors of the legislation, Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Illinois Governor George Ryan, Kirk Bloodsworth, a death row inmate who was exonerated by DNA evidence in 1993 and others at a news conference on Capitol Hill.**

**"Since 1977, the State of Illinois has taken the life of 12 death row inmates. During that same period, the state exonerated 13 people on death row, including 4 in the last 15 months. That is a frightening fact which could have resulted in a mistake that the state could not fix," Schakowsky said.**

**"It is a fact that the nation is split on the death penalty. It is also a fact that no one wants to see an innocent person executed. We must ensure that innocent people are not being put to death and that justice, equality, and due process are the law of the land. The Innocence Protection Act of 2000 is an important step in helping us reach that goal," Schakowsky added.**

**Schakowsky applauded Governor Ryan's decision to halt all executions until a panel can review the capital conviction process. She also hailed the work of Northwestern University students that lead to the exoneration of Ronald Jones.**

**"Problems of inadequate representation, lack of access to DNA testing, police misconduct, racial bias and other errors are causing innocent people to be condemned to die. That is unacceptable and immoral," Schakowsky said.**

**The legislation would ensure that convicted offenders are afforded an opportunity to prove their innocence through DNA testing; help states provide competent legal services at every state of a death penalty prosecution; enable those who can prove their innocence to recover some measure of compensation for their unjust incarceration; and limit the Federal government's authority to seek the death penalty in States that do not permit the imposition of such penalty.**

**In addition, the bill would give juries in Federal death penalty prosecutions the option of sentencing defendants to life without possibility of release; encourage states to give**

**juries in capital cases accurate information on the available sentencing options; and provide the public with more reliable and detailed information regarding the administration of the nation's capital punishment laws.**