

February 10, 1999

**REPRESENTATIVE SCHAKOWSKY DENOUNCES ASSAULT ON WORKPLACE SAFETY,
PUBLIC HEALTH & THE ENVIRONMENT**

EXPRESSES DISAPPOINTMENT IN THE HOUSE'S FAILURE

TO PASS THE "DEFENSE OF THE ENVIRONMENT AMENDMENT"

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. Representative Janice Schakowsky (D-IL) criticized the latest assault on public health, workplace safety, and the environment, and denounced the passing of H.R. 350, the Mandates Information Act.

Schakowsky said, "If H.R. 350 becomes the law of the land, families in Illinois and throughout the nation will pay a steep price. This bill is a backdoor assault on quality health care, a clean environment, and a safe workplace, and it is a step backward for consumer protection and equitable pay. Worthy legislation, such as the Patients' Bill of Rights, could be defeated without debate."

H.R. 350 will extend the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act to the private sector, create a new procedural hurdle for the enactment of legislation imposing new mandates on the private sector, and require the Congressional Budget Office to conduct a cost analysis on all legislation affecting the private sector. The bill will allow any Member to use a procedural maneuver called a point of order to protest proposed legislation or challenge existing laws that will cost the private sector more than \$100 million. Once a point of order is raised, there is a mere twenty minutes of debate, followed by a vote. A majority is needed to override the point of order for consideration of the bill to proceed.

Schakowsky also expressed disappointment in the House's failure to pass the Defense of the Environment Amendment, an amendment she introduced to H.R. 350 with Representative Henry Waxman (D-CA). The amendment would have ensured that laws protecting the environment, health, and public safety cannot be repealed without a debate and vote by the full House of Representatives.

The Defense of the Environment Amendment would have ensured that Members have the same opportunity to raise a point of order to block legislation which would undermine public protections and dangerously jeopardize the quality of life for millions of Americans.

"The Defense of the Environment Amendment is a safeguard that would have ensured that public health and safety and environmental protections cannot be repealed without debate. By defeating this amendment, the House has gone on record as favoring corporate interest ahead of public interest," added Schakowsky.