

SCHAKOWSKY TOURS ONE OF THE SEVERELY OVERCROWDED SCHOOLS IN ROGERS PARK CALLS ON CONGRESS TO PASS SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AND MODERNIZATION BILL

CHICAGO, IL Following her tour today of Boone Elementary School in Rogers Park to examine overcrowding conditions, U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) called on Congress to pass legislation to help local school districts implement much-needed school modernization and construction.□

"What I saw at Boone School is unacceptable.□ Classes are being held in the hallways, students are learning in makeshift classrooms, like the teachers' lounge and cafeteria, and three different classes are being taught at the same time in the same room," Schakowsky said.

"Up until now, Congress has failed to make the grade by derailing efforts to pass meaningful school modernization and construction legislation.□ As a result, millions of students in Illinois and the nation have returned to overcrowded classrooms, crumbling schools, and unsafe conditions, making it difficult for them to learn and for teachers to teach," Schakowsky added.

Schakowsky called on Congress to pass President Clinton's school construction proposal, introduced in the House by Representative Charles Rangel (D-NY).□ The Public School Modernization Act of 1999, H.R. 1660, would provide \$24.8 billion in interest-free funding over the next two years for school construction and modernization projects. The bill would allow Illinois to issue \$1.125 billion in bonds.□ Chicago would be able to issue \$676 million in bonds and save up to \$333 million in interest payments.

School districts would issue bonds for the money, and the federal government would pay the interest on the bonds through a federal tax credit.□ There would be no federal involvement in the selection, design, or implementation of school modernization and construction projects.□ All of those decisions would be made at the state and/or local levels.□ The only federal role would be providing tax-subsidized financing under the same procedures currently utilized for tax-exempt bonds.□ □

"The bill is a cost-effective way of helping local school districts design solutions that best meet their needs," said Schakowsky, who joined her Democratic colleagues last month to force a timely and open debate on school modernization proposals, including H.R. 1660.□ Schakowsky and House members signed a "Discharge Petition," which is a parliamentary tool that allows a majority of members to force a bill that is being bottled-up in committee onto the House floor for debate and consideration.

Currently, 1100 students attend Boone Elementary, 300 more than the school can reasonably handle.□ Similar overcrowding situations exist in surrounding schools.□ □ Nearby Clinton School serves 1512 students, but must rent 13 classrooms from a private

school for 400 students.

Overcrowding conditions at Boone Elementary have resulted in some classes being held in the hallways and, in some instances, three classes being held simultaneously in the same classroom. The teachers' lounge has been converted to a classroom and the cafeteria is used as a multi-purpose room.

Schakowsky said, "I want to commend all those involved, including the parents, teachers and local officials, for working to resolve the overcrowding problem at Boone Elementary. I will use all means at my disposal so that local school districts receive the necessary federal assistance to ensure that our children have a safe, clean, and healthy learning environment in the 21st Century."

In Illinois, 89% of all schools are in need of improvements and 60 facilities are more than 100 years old. It would cost \$1 billion to replace these facilities.