

Schakowsky Unveils Her Whip Team

**By Erin P. Billings**

**Roll Call**

**April 6, 2005**

Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.) this week rolled out a 25-Member whip team in her bid to become the next Caucus vice chairwoman, naming a veteran fellow Illinois lawmaker to lead the campaign organization.

Schakowsky is one of three candidates seeking the No. 4 House Democratic leadership slot and the latest to unveil her team of supporters in the only currently contested leadership race.

Schakowsky faces New York Rep. Joe Crowley, a New Democrat and Financial Services member, and Connecticut Democrat John Larson, also a New Democrat who sits on Ways and Means, in the race to succeed Rep. James Clyburn (S.C.) for the vice chairmanship.

Rep. Ruben Hinojosa (Texas) was also a candidate but abandoned his bid for the position two weeks ago.

Clyburn cannot seek a third term to the job in 2006 and has kicked off his campaign for chairman of the Caucus. The vice chairman slot, however, could become available earlier if a series of events in New Jersey lead Caucus Chairman Bob Menendez to vacate his position in the House and his leadership post to accept appointment to the Senate.

Schakowsky tapped Rep. Jerry Costello as her campaign chairman and named 24 other supporters who will also serve as whips. As expected, Schakowsky's greatest support comes from liberals, the Illinois delegation and women. She also has significant backing from members of the Congressional Black Caucus.

"We've got people from throughout the country and from all parts of the party," Schakowsky said in an interview. "I am proud of the diversity of the team that's been assembled, and the most important thing is this is just the beginning."

Among those in Schakowsky's camp are Illinois Reps. Melissa Bean, Danny Davis, Lane Evans, Luis Gutierrez, Jesse Jackson Jr., Dan Lipinski and Bobby Rush. Also on the whip team are California Reps. Lois Capps, Susan Davis, Sam Farr, Juanita Millender-McDonald, George Miller, Maxine Waters, Diane Watson and Lynn Woolsey.

Ohio Reps. Sherrod Brown, Stephanie Tubbs Jones and Dennis Kucinich are also backing Schakowsky, along with Reps. John Conyers (Mich.), Elijah Cummings (Md.), Ral Grijalva (Ariz.), Eddie Bernice Johnson (Texas), Allyson Schwartz (Pa.) and Bennie Thompson (Miss.).

"The whip team and I will be highlighting Jan's many strengths, including her dedication to the Democratic Party, her fundraising prowess and her organizational skills," said Costello, who penned a letter to Members this week asking them to support Schakowsky. "She brings a Midwestern voice to this race which will aid our ability to reach out to all regions of the country. Jan has been a leader on major issues such as Social Security and Medicare and is an extremely hard worker. We believe she would be a terrific vice chair."

Schakowsky, a key ally to Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (Calif.), is a Chief Deputy Minority Whip and holds a seat on Energy and Commerce. She acknowledged that many of her early supporters are from the progressive wing of the party but insisted that she has appeal party-wide.

"My goal is to strengthen the big tent nature of this caucus," Schakowsky said. "That's what the success of the party will be in the future - spreading the Democratic message and helping the

Caucus develop a winning message everywhere."

"Everybody in the beginning reaches out to those who may be the most likely supporters," she added. "But I think we'll see as we add on Members that we are reaching out further and further into our Caucus."

Crowley announced his six-person whip team in February and plans to expand it in the coming days, according to his office. Crowley's whip organization is led by veteran New York Rep. Nita Lowey, along with Reps. Jim Cooper (Tenn.), Artur Davis (Ala.), Steve Israel (N.Y.), Al Green (Texas) and Jos Serrano (N.Y.).

His other public supporters include Reps. Peter DeFazio (Ore.), Alcee Hastings (Fla.), Kendrick Meek (Fla.), Adam Smith (Wash.), Barney Frank (Mass.), Neil Abercrombie (Hawaii), Bart Gordon (Tenn.), Dennis Moore (Kan.), Dan Boren (Okla.) and Lucille Roybal-Allard (Calif.).

Larson's whip team so far includes two co-chairmen, Reps. Rosa DeLauro (Conn.) and John Murtha (Pa.), and a whip, Rep. Mike Capuano (Mass.). The Connecticut lawmaker also plans to expand his organization in the future.

Copyright 2005 Roll Call Inc. All rights reserved.