

Schakowsky: Investigate Whether Bush Distorted the Case for War

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Patrick Butler **The News-Star**

A proposed investigation already supported by more than 100 members of Congress would go wherever the facts lead - even if that means a presidential impeachment, U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-9th) promised last week.

Flanked by North Side parents with sons either in Iraq or scheduled to go there, Schakowsky told a Thursday, August 28, news conference at the Dirksen Federal Building that Americans deserve to know whether they were lied to in the weeks leading up to the invasion of Iraq.

"Where are the weapons of mass destruction? Where are the nuclear weapons? Where is the Al Queda connection?" Schakowsky asked.

So far, none have been found - nor has any credible evidence surfaced showing that Iraq had been reconstituting its nuclear weapons program, Schakowsky said.

And it's not just anti-war Democrats who want to know. Schakowsky added that 26 of those congressmen on record as supporting H.R. 2635 authorizing the special investigation had originally voted in favor of going into Iraq and now "feel betrayed."

"And remember, we're on recess now," said Schakowsky, who expects to line up still more support when Congress reconvenes after the Labor Day holiday.

Moreover, she added, more than 420,000 ordinary citizens have signed petitions calling for a

special panel - modeled after the September 11 Commission - to find out whether President Bush deliberately distorted the facts to whip up support for war.

And yes, Schakowsky added, if the panel finds that the president was lying, his job could indeed be on the line.

"That's why this first step of the commission is so important, to see where it may lead," said Schakowsky.

Referring to the impeachment proceedings launched against President Clinton in the wake of the Monica Lewinsky affair, Schakowsky said many people she has already talked to consider "lying about the reasons for going to war far more serious than lying about a relationship with a woman."

Americans also need to find out "what other faulty information did administration officials, including President Bush, tell the American people and the world? Did the Bush Administration knowingly deceive us and manufacture intelligence in order to build public support for the invasion of Iraq? Did Iraq really pose an imminent threat to our nation?"

Schakowsky added that everything that needs to be learned can be learned without compromising the country's safety. As Bush Administration officials warned might happen if too much information were disclosed.

"I think there may be some classified information (discussed) in closed hearings," she said. "But at the same time, this administration is very prone to over-classify information. Embarrassment is not an excuse to classify anything."

Joining Schakowsky at the news conference were Lake View resident Fran Johns, whose Marine son just returned from Iraq "changed forever" as a result of his brief war experiences, and Linda Engund, whose 21-year-old son John is scheduled to go there in the next few months.

Parents especially have a right to know whether the president's case for war was "accurate, exaggerated or simply untrue," Engund said.

There is a dark cloud of doubt (and it needs to be cleared up) because in the future, we need to be sure we're going to war to defend our country, and not promote a political agenda," Johns said.