

Legislator pushing for \$90 billion veterans package

May 29th, 2003

By Amy McLaughlin

Daily Herald Staff Writer

U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky is joining other Democrats in pushing for a veterans package that includes a \$1,000 bonus for soldiers who served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Schakowsky, an Evanston Democrat whose district includes most of Des Plaines, said the package would also include improvements in health care coverage for all veterans.

Much of the proposal is meant to respond to the current federal budget, which includes new enrollment fees and prescription drug co-pays for veterans who do not have service-related injuries.

The Democrats' plan would eliminate the \$250 enrollment fee and prescription drug co-pays, reduce the time it takes to get care in VA hospitals and allow veterans to receive both retirement and disability payments, among others things.

It would cost an estimated \$90 billion over 10 years to implement all of the proposals.

Nadeam Elshami, a spokesman for Schakowsky, said Democrats are planning to introduce the legislation next week. Several House Democrats announced their ideas just before Congress' recess for the Memorial Day holiday.