

## **Democrats question foreign policy**

May 22nd, 2003

Evanston Review

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A perception that the Bush Administration's foreign policy is dangerous for the nation's security dominated comments from area Democrats at a forum Sunday at the Winnetka Community House.

Attendees also expressed frustration with the Democratic Party's inability to counter that policy.

"When are the Democrats going to grow some spine?" forum moderator Bob Williamson, a New Trier Township Democrat, asked to start the dialogue.

U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-9th, agreed Democrats need to be better heard, but went on to say that it is very hard to get attention "in the fog of war" and that in many congressional districts, the political consequences for an elected official raising one's voice can be costly.

Hank Perritt, the professor of law and director of the Center for Law and Financial Markets at IIT, called for the Democratic Party to, "find its core values and then speak from the heart.

"We at the grassroots have the capacity to change policy, message and governments. Don't sit silent," Perritt, the 2002 Democratic candidate for the 10th Congressional District, told the

audience. "We should demand accountability from everybody, especially the president of the United States."

Schakowsky described today's atmosphere in Washington as "at times like Alice in Wonderland" with so much unquestioning faith that current foreign policy has made us safer. She quoted Ted Sorenson, former speech writer for President Kennedy, who recently said "the Bush doctrine of preemptive strikes without legal justification or evidence is music to the ears of terrorist organizations that specialize in such strikes."

Schakowsky said that these days such language calling for the United States to lead by force of example, not force of arms, is viewed as unpatriotic.

"With Colin Powell and the State Department viewed as too soft and all of our foreign policy in the hands of the Pentagon, these are very dangerous times," Schakowsky said.

Several audience members asked how Democrats should address the growing fear of terrorism among Americans, and what steps could be taken to eliminate organized terrorist activities.

Schakowsky said that Republicans have "played fear like a fiddle" and gave a personal anecdote about a friend who was afraid she might be put on a list by the Department of Homeland Security if she went to an Internet site that opposed invading Iraq.

To remove the fear of terrorism, Schakowsky said the country must deal with realities.

"Presently various first responder forces such as firefighters and the police don't even have shared radio frequencies because of FCC policies," she said. "And we aren't putting our money where our mouth is. First responders need to be better trained. There's a lack of security around chemical and power plants. Today, firefighters are actually being laid off."

Perritt said there must be an international consensus and infrastructure to isolate rogue nations

and organizations before the United States can succeed against terrorism.

"President Bush favors coalitions of convenience rather than lasting institutions," Perritt said. "After World War II, we led the world in helping create an elaborate structure of peace with the UN, NATO and other organizations. We need to go back to strengthening these multinational institutions."

A suggestion was made that a Marshall Plan might be implemented in Iraq. Perritt said "We can't send a general in for 90 days and expect a nation to be built. To finish what we started will require more troops in Iraq not fewer. It will require years and possibly decades working with other nations. To build a nation that respects human rights requires an understanding of the dynamics of the local society. Under the present policies, the lines to sign up for terrorist organizations aren't getting shorter."

When asked if unqualified U.S. support of Israel should be continued, Schakowsky answered that support for Israel should be moving down the road toward peace and a two-state solution. She suggested it can begin by dismantling illegal settlements.

"A Palestinian state can't exist pockmarked with Israeli settlements," she said.

The Foreign Policy Forum 2004 and Beyond, jointly sponsored by the New Trier Democrats and the Democratic Party of Evanston and attended by about 200 local residents, included a discussion of the 2004 election and how Democrats might win over independents and moderate Republican voters.

"When we speak clearly about our democratic small "d" and capital "D" principals, we can win," Schakowsky said. "Conviction in a belief is what wins elections."