

Bush's war on immigrants is un-American

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Democratic Congresswoman Jan **Schakowsky** has vowed to fight 'the unrelenting onslaught of attacks on immigrants by the Bush White House.'

In tandem with the Indian American Democratic Organization, **Schakowsky** - a member of the Congressional Caucus on India and represents the 9th District of Illinois, which has a significant population of South Asians - launched her campaign at a town hall meeting in Devon Avenue April 23.

'In the past two years,' she said, 'our nation has experienced one of the worst anti-immigrant administrations in the history of our country.'

'From increased detention and deportation, mandatory registration that mostly targets Arabs and Muslims, worsening services and short-circuited appeals process, immigrants are subjected daily to the public policy attacks of the Bush administration.'

At the meeting, **Schakowsky** released a list of the top 10 anti-immigrant policies she said she intended to challenge. The list includes the secretly adopted police powers for the FBI; detention of immigrants without due process; civil liberties infringement; rounding up and registering Arabs and Muslims; short-circuited appeals process for immigration cases; deteriorating immigration customer services; decrease in refugee admissions; less protection for women victims of violence seeking asylum; additional layers of bureaucracy and automated systems replacing real people.

'I join millions from across our country to say to President Bush: 'Your

war on immigrants is un-American," **Schakowsky** told a gathering that included immigrants and advocates from across Chicago.

Representatives of various immigrant communities in Chicago, included R.S. Rajan, executive director of the Indo-American Center and Shaukat Sindhu, chairman, Pakistani American Association of America, were also present.

Schakowsky's press aide Nadeam Elshami told India Abroad that following the passage of the Patriot Act, constituents, including large numbers from South Asia, "have approached our office fearful they will be deported just for being immigrants."

The town hall meeting, Elshami said, was to "convey to the Bush administration that immigrants are hardworking, law-abiding, tax-paying members of the community, who contribute in many ways to the enrichment of our community."

The larger message for the Bush administration, he said, was that immigrants are organized and can, and will, come out in force.

Elsewhere, senior Congressmen F. James Sensenbrenner Jr. (Wisconsin Republican) and John Conyers Jr. (Michigan Democrat), the chairman and ranking member of the House Judiciary Committee respectively, have asked the Justice Department to clarify provisions of the Patriot Act.

In an 18-page letter to Attorney General John Ashcroft, the two expressed concern over the provision whereby investigators can violate the privacy of immigrants and citizens including their private books, records, papers and other documents.

The lawmakers asked whether these investigations targeted persons who are identified as agents of a foreign power, or any person living in the country.

They also challenged the Justice Department's increased use of 'national security letters.'

Under these 'national security letters' guidelines, the DoJ can require businesses to hand over records - electronic and otherwise - on finances, telephone calls, e-mails and other personal information.

Sensenbrenner and Conyers asked Ashcroft to 'identify the specific authority relied on for issuing these letters.'

They also asked why the DoJ guidelines for General Crimes and Domestic Security Investigations had been revised when 'the apparent threat against the United States is a threat from foreign terrorist groups.'

Sensenbrenner and Conyers also called on Ashcroft to explain the department's detention of persons as material witnesses in terrorism investigations, and sought details on the number detained, and the length of each detention. They also sought information on the number of detainees who had sought a review or filed an appeal, and the results of those reviews and/or appeals.

The lawmakers said as chairman and ranking member of the committee, they had the responsibility to 'conduct oversight of the Department of Justice's efforts to combat terrorism, which includes implementation of the USA Patriot Act signed into law by President Bush October 26, 2001.'