

**Kirk lands spot on an influential spending panel;  
3rd state member of Appropriations**

January 10th , 2003

By Mike Dorning

Chicago Tribune

U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk was named Thursday to a House committee responsible for directing federal spending, enhancing his influence over the budget and strengthening his ability to win funding for projects in the region.

Kirk, a Republican from the North Shore, is the third member of the state's congressional delegation to be appointed to the Appropriations Committee. He and others attributed his appointment to the influence of House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) "This is a new leg up for Illinois, showing the clout of the speaker," Kirk said. "This was the speaker's call, and he felt Illinois should receive another seat."

A party panel makes committee appointments, but the speaker has outside influence over Republican slots.

The Appropriations Committee drafts the annual spending bills that fund the government, allowing its members to control the line items that determine how federal money is spent.

With his appointment, Kirk follows in the footsteps of his former boss and predecessor, John Porter, who represented Kirk's district until 2000. Kirk handled appropriations work as an aide to Porter for four years.

The other Illinois members of the committee are Republican Rep. Ray LaHood of Peoria and Democratic Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. of Chicago.

U.S. Rep. Jan **Schakowsky** (D-Ill.) also received a sought-after appointment, to the Commerce Committee, which includes in its jurisdiction health care, business regulation and energy policy.

She has been an advocate of liberal policies on health care and consumer issues. **Schakowsky** started her public life by co-founding a consumer group that successfully campaigned to put labels on perishable foods showing their expiration dates.

She has often stressed party positions in favor of expanding Medicare to provide prescription drug coverage for the elderly. She said she would focus her committee work on expanding coverage of prescription drugs and other health care costs.

**Schakowsky** was an early supporter of incoming House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi of California and has helped raise money for Democratic House candidates.

Freshman U.S. Rep. Rahm Emanuel (D-Ill.) sought a position on the Ways and Means Committee, which handles tax policy, but did not get it.