

Schakowsky won't run for U.S. Senate in 2004

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WASHINGTON (AP) - U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky said Thursday she will not be a candidate next year for the U.S. Senate seat held by Illinois Republican Peter Fitzgerald. "Now more than ever, with the Republicans controlling all branches of government, I can most effectively speak out for the constituents of the 9th District and the people of Illinois as an active member of the Democratic leadership team in the House," the Chicago Democrat said in a statement. "That is why I have decided not to run for the United States Senate in 2004." Schakowsky had been suggesting for months that she might become one of the growing number of Democrats preparing to run for Fitzgerald's job. She said she was looking for the best way to advance her progressive agenda. She announced her decision to stay out of the race after the Democratic House leadership agreed earlier in the week to keep her on their team as one of six chief deputy whips. She also was tapped Thursday to join the House Energy and Commerce Committee, a post she sought after having served previously on the House Financial Services and Government Reform committees.

Democrats view Fitzgerald as the Senate's most vulnerable Republican up for re-election. Three _ state Sen. Sen. Barack Obama, businessman Blair Hull, former Chicago school board president Gery Chico _ already have been raising money. Former Sen. Carol Moseley-Braun and Illinois Comptroller Dan Hynes are expected to announce their decisions on entering the field later this month.