

**MAY 10, 2000**

**OLDER WOMEN'S LEAGUE REPORT HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR AFFORDABLE, UNIVERSAL MEDICARE DRUG BENEFIT**

**SCHAKOWSKY AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESSIONAL CAUCUS FOR WOMEN'S ISSUES JOIN OWL IN RELEASING REPORT**

**WASHINGTON, D.C. - Following the release of a report showing that older women are greatly burdened by the high cost of prescription drugs, U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today joined the Older Women's League (OWL) in calling for an affordable Medicare drug benefit. The report entitled "Prescription for Change: Why Women Need a Medicare Drug Benefit" was prepared by OWL and released at a news conference attended by Schakowsky and other members of the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues.**

**"Millions of women over the age of 65 cannot lead healthy and productive lives because of the high cost of their prescription drugs. In addition to living with the physical pain, imagine the psychological strain an older woman must endure knowing that she cannot afford a prescription that would help ease her suffering and improve her quality of life. This is the sad reality that millions of older women face everyday," Schakowsky said.**

**"I applaud OWL for putting together this comprehensive report. It clearly demonstrates that older women, and all Medicare recipients, are entitled to a Medicare drug benefit that is universal, affordable, and lowers out of pocket expenses," Schakowsky added.**

**Among the most significant findings of the report was that women are disproportionately impacted by the high cost of prescription drugs as compared to men. The mean retirement income for women over the age of 65 was \$14,820 compared to men at more than \$26,000. However, women on average pay \$430 a year for prescription drugs as compared to men who pay \$380. In addition, women make up 58% of beneficiaries who pay more than \$500 a year in out of pocket drug costs.**

**In addition, more than half of women over the age of 65 have a yearly income of less than \$10,000 and three out of four have incomes less than \$15,000.**

**"At a time of budget surpluses and when we have proof that drug companies are price-gouging seniors, we can certainly make sure that all Medicare beneficiaries have access to affordable prescription drugs. No one should be left behind," Schakowsky said.**