CFAnews

MARCH – APRIL 2008, VOLUME 34, NO. 2, ISSN #0732-8281

CONSUMER FEDERATION OF AMERICA

# Senate Adopts Pro-Consumer CPSC Reform Bill

The Senate gave overwhelming bipartisan approval in March to strong, pro-consumer legislation to reform operations of the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).

Following House passage of bipartisan CPSC reform legislation in December, the action sets the stage for enactment of a final bill this year once differences between the two measures are worked out in conference committee.

"For far too long the Consumer Product Safety Commission has been starved of the resources, regulatory and enforcement authority, and transparency it needs to ensure the safety of consumer products," said CFA Senior Counsel Rachel Weintraub.

She praised both the House and Senate for taking steps to "patch the holes in our nation's safety net."

As passed by the Senate, the bill would:

- increase the CPSC's budget to $155 million over the next seven years;
- create a consumer database of product hazard information to better help consumers make informed purchasing decisions;
- make the industry's voluntary toy safety standards mandatory, ensuring that all toys are tested to comprehensive criteria;
- establish third-party, pre-market testing of children's products;
- increase the current limit on CPSC's civil penalties to $10 million for most violations, and cap it at $20 million for "aggravating circumstances;"
- give state attorneys general tools to better protect their residents through expanded enforcement authority;
- lower lead levels in children's products; and
- protect CPSC staff and private-sector employees who blow the whistle on wrongdoing.

## Weakening Amendments Rejected

The bill was adopted on a 79-13 vote after numerous amendments to weaken the bill were rejected and despite White House opposition to a number of key Senate bill provisions.

In addition, a number of pro-consumer amendments were adopted during floor consideration, including two specifically endorsed by CFA: an amendment by Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) to restrict the commercial use or sale of unsafe secondhand cribs and an amendment by Sens. Barack Obama (D-IL) and Benjamin Cardin (D-MD) to improve the information provided to consumers on recall notices.

In a joint statement cheering the bill's passage, CFA, Consumers Union, Kids in Danger, National Research Center for Women and Families, Union of Concerned Scientists, U.S. Public Interest Research Group, and Public Citizen praised the leadership of Sens. Mark Pryor (D-AR), Ted Stevens (R-AK), and Daniel Inouye (D-HI) for their efforts in reaching this major accomplishment.

With the bill now under consideration in conference committee, the groups noted the importance of marrying the strong reforms of the Senate bill with key provision in the House version passed in December.

"Both the House and Senate bills contain numerous provisions that significantly improve the product safety status quo," Weintraub noted.

CFA joined with other consumer and safety groups to outline their priorities and preferences among the provisions of the House and Senate bills.

## Groups Urge Conferees to Retain Pro-consumer Provisions

For example, the groups are urging the conference committee to retain Senate provisions creating the public product hazard database, state attorney general enforcement authority, whistleblower protections, and making the voluntary toy safety standard mandatory.

The groups are also seeking to ensure inclusion in a final bill of a House measure that provides for product testing of more children's products by defining such products as those designed for children under 12 years of age. The comparable Senate provision covers products designed for children under seven years of age.

On provisions related to lead, the groups seek to combine the lower lead levels of the Senate bill with the House bill's timetable for implementation.

Commenting on the bills as a whole, Weintraub called this "the most significant improvement in almost two decades" to an agency responsible for overseeing the safety of more than 15,000 consumer products.

"For many years, consumer groups have been working to increase CPSC's resources, strengthen CPSC authority and ultimately make consumer products safer for all consumers, especially children. Consumers have been waiting for these necessary reforms," she said.

**On the Web**
http://www.consumerfed.org/pdfs/CPSC_Act_passage_3-6-08.pdf
http://www.consumerfed.org/pdfs/CPSC_Rebuttal_2-29-08.pdf
http://www.consumerfed.org/pdfs/Right_to_Know_Amendment_Letter_3-5-08.pdf
http://www.consumerfed.org/pdfs/Feinstein_Crib_Letter_3-5-08.pdf

# Weak Plans Offered in Midst of Financial Crisis

As the credit crisis continued to worsen this spring, and the country teetered on the brink of a recession, neither Congress nor the administration had much to offer hard-hit investors or homeowners facing foreclosure.

The Senate adopted mortgage relief legislation in April, but not before stripping the provision most needed to stem the rising tide of foreclosures. The administration, meanwhile, rolled out a proposal for financial regulatory reform that was widely criticized for being unresponsive to the current crisis.

"Congress and the administration have still not come to terms with the economic devastation that the foreclosures crisis is causing all over the country," said CFA Legislative Director Travis Plunkett.

"Voluntary measures by lenders and reshuffling the regulatory chairs on the deck of the Titanic are not going to help borrowers who were relentlessly sold unaffordable loans to remain in their homes," he added.

As adopted by the Senate, the housing bill (H.R. 3221) would:

- provide tax breaks worth an estimated $17.6 billion for struggling businesses, including home builders;
- create a temporary property tax deduction for tax filers who do not itemize their deductions;
- provide a $7,000 tax credit for buyers of foreclosed homes, $150 million to fund counseling for borrowers designed to help them avoid foreclosure, and $4 billion to allow local governments to buy foreclosed properties; and
- rewrite the Federal Housing Administration law, permanently raising to $550,000 the dollar limit on mortgages the FHA can ensure in the highest-cost real estate markets.

What it would not do is allow bankruptcy judges to modify the terms of subprime and non-traditional mortgages for debtors in bankruptcy under certain limited circumstances. Faced with overwhelming opposition from Republicans and some Democrats, Senate leaders agreed to strip that provision from the bill.

## Pro-consumer Reform Measure Tabled in Senate

Instead, they allowed a separate vote on the measure as an amendment from its author, Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL). The amendment was tabled on a 58-36 vote.

Despite White House opposition, the bill then passed the Senate on an 84-12 vote.

CFA joined with 15 other national organizations to condemn the vote on the Durbin amendment, calling the bankruptcy provision "the single most significant step needed to help the 20,000 American families with subprime loans who are losing their homes each week through foreclosure."

"We are left with a bill that is loaded with special considerations for mortgage companies and builders but that does very little for homeowners who were sold predatory loans by mortgage lenders," said CFA Director of Housing and Credit Policy Allen Fishbein.

Senate Democratic leaders expressed disappointment in the final bill and said they were looking to the House to make improvements.

## Efforts Move to House

The main House bill, H.R. 5830, was approved by the House on a 266-154 vote as this issue of the newsletter went to press.

It includes a number of provisions to provide relief to troubled homeowners. It would, for example, create a $300 billion new Federal Housing Administration (FHA) mortgage-insurance rescue fund intended to avoid foreclosures and provide for additional funding to provide mortgage counseling for delinquent borrowers.

Under the bill, the FHA would receive an infusion of funds, and it would be subject to a new mandate to offer refinancing to those whose homes have dropped in value since they took out their mortgage.

Lenders would receive an FHA guarantee on the loan only if they voluntarily agreed to write down the amount borrowers owed to

*(Continued on Page 4)*

**On the Web**
www.consumerfed.org/pdfs/CFA_Stmt_on_Cloning_Announcement_1_15_08.pdf
www.consumerfed.org/pdfs/FDA_To_Issue_Cloning_Decision_12-18-07_FINAL.pdf

# Advocates Assess Status of Consumer Agenda

The new political environment offers a "rare opportunity" to make progress on health care reform and strengthen the consumer movement in the process, Consumers Union President James Guest said in a keynote speech at Consumer Assembly '08.

"I do believe that we have a chance in the environment going forward of significantly transforming our health care system," he said.

Consumers Union (CU) has been laying the groundwork for such a campaign for several years through a major effort to "really build grassroots consumer power behind what we're working on," he said.

CU now is committed to being "part of a strong, national, aggressive health care campaign, using all the tools at our disposal," he said.

"The experts are going to tell us it is exceedingly complicated," he said. "Of course it is." The question, he said, is whether we "can indeed achieve meaningful change."

In the current political environment, "there is going to be tremendous pressure for something to happen," he predicted. He is convinced, he said, that the general public "wants and expects that health care reform will be a major priority."

But we also know from experience that reform efforts will face very strong opposition, he said. To succeed, advocates "have to be able to harness people's energy and frustrations."

If advocates can do that, it has the potential to "reinvigorate the consumer movement" and "really foster a new wave of consumer activism and activists," he said.

### Advocates Grade Congress, Weigh Legislative Prospects

Advocates have already seen signs of an invigorated consumer agenda in Congress, according to participants in a general session panel on "Congressional Performance and Progress."

While consumer issues weren't at the top of the congressional agenda, that was probably appropriate in light of the seriousness of the issues that did occupy Congress, such as the war in Iraq, said Gene Kimmelman, Vice President for Federal and International Affairs at Consumers Union.

Meanwhile, progress was made in 2007 on FDA reform, food safety legislation, and product safety legislation, he said, and greater attention was given to identity theft. "So, I give them a B for trying," he said. "We have to hope it only continues."

"The most important thing, in terms of our workload anyway, is that we don't have to try to stop all of these tort reform bills anymore, and we now are trying to actually pass some positive bills in this area," said Public Citizen President Joan Claybrook.

Among the victories she cited were passage of an ethics law, amendment of the Freedom of Information Act, the defeat of Michael Baroody's appointment as Chairman of the CPSC, and passage of the PDUFA, including creation of a national database on clinical trials.

Ed Mierzwinski, Consumer Program Director of U.S. Public Interest Research Group, gave Congress greatest credit for "the oversight they've done." One area where oversight has "changed industry practices" is in the credit card industry, he said.

### Energy Bill Offers Rare Victory

He said Congress fell short, however, in their ability to get the big legislative packages "across the finish line," with one notable exception – passage of the energy bill provisions raising CAFE standards. "It wasn't everything we wanted," he said, "but just getting CAFE through Congress was a major victory."

Financial issues have been more disappointing, he said. Although the House passed mortgage legislation, it includes a "major preemption provision" and "federal rights without remedies." And even the more consumer-friendly Senate bill does little "about the people who are in foreclosure," he said.

"There's a lot that Congress didn't deal with," Kimmelman added, including health care, food safety, and communications.

To make progress on those issues, he said, "We need a much more motivated and active public."

"When you only have a one-vote majority in the Senate … it's going to be very tough on the most controversial legislation," Claybrook added, agreeing with Kimmelman that getting the public involved is essential. "We're going to have to raise a big public fuss," she said.

### Federal Agencies Critiqued

Advocates on a panel on Federal Regulatory Failures and Prospects offered a grimmer assessment of the Bush Administration's record than the mixed, but largely positive review Congress received.

The current regulatory shortcomings are the result of "systemic problems," said Rick Melberth, Director of Regulatory Policy for OMB Watch. These include:

1) a "belief that regulations pose a burden on business and that they are way too costly and the government should let the market decide;"

CU President James Guest

2) an "outright attack on scientific integrity by this administration;" and

3) a lack of transparency, with regulatory business "being conducted behind closed doors."

As a result, he said, regulatory agencies have seen their power "dismantled."

Using specific examples from the food safety arena, Michael Jacobson, Executive Director of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, supported that view.

One factor, he said, that leads to inaction, even on problems that have been widely recognized, is "the cost-benefit approach to regulation." That can lead regulators to study the issue, rather than take action, and "the problem becomes more statistical, less human," he said.

Another reason the government fails to act is that it lacks adequate funding, he said, particularly to take on big fights that will engender strong opposition from the regulated industries. Other problems include bureaucratic red tape, short staffing, and ideological opposition to regulation, he said.

"Hopefully, the next administration, whichever it is, will be much stronger," he said. "Hopefully, Congress will provide more funding. To really have an impact," he added, "all of us are really going to have to keep on the pressure working with congressional allies."

### Safety Agencies Seen as Reluctant to Act

"Even when you have 43,000 dead bodies on the road every year and you know what the causes are, you can't get these regulators to regulate," said Henry Jasny, General Counsel for Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety.

"There's a leadership vacuum at NHTSA," he said. "Partly it's due to political appointees," he said. "At best, they are very well intentioned, but they don't have a regulatory mindset."

Other problems include lack of follow-through, the revolving door between the agency and the industry, and the role of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs in reviewing agency rules.

Calling the Consumer Product Safety Commission "the little agency that couldn't," CFA Senior Counsel Rachel Weintraub said the agency has in recent years been very reluctant to use the authority it has to address safety issues.

As one example, she said, the number of civil penalties assessed annually has gone from 12.4 during the Clinton years to just 5.8 during the Bush years.

In addition, the agency is seriously underfunded, she said. "The CPSC has been under-nourished consistently, but it has been starved by the Bush Administration."

More recently, she said, the administration has shown signs that it "has realized that you can use regulation … to the advantage of industry," by adding preemption language, for example, to the preamble of the mattress rule.

Finally, she said, the "CPSC is the least transparent agency in the entire federal government," in part because of a provision in its authorizing statute that allows companies to sue the agency to enjoin it from releasing information and in part out of a philosophical bent toward non-disclosure.

# Pollsters Find Consumers in Sour Mood

The country, in an increasingly sour mood, is growing more concerned about issues that hit the consumer pocketbook, according to two pollsters who discussed "Consumer Concerns and Priorities" in a general session panel at Consumer Assembly '08.

"The public is quite unhappy," said Scott Keeter, Director of Survey Research for The Pew Resource Center. While the Iraq War was a triggering event for the decline in the country's mood, rising concerns about the economy have become an increasingly important factor in that dissatisfaction, he said.

Early in this decade, pollsters began to see a growing partisan divide on views of the economy, with Democrats and Independents expressing significantly more negative views. "It was really as if Republicans and Democrats and Independents were seeing two different worlds," he said.

Now Republicans, and particularly moderate Republicans, are becoming more negative, lessening the divide, he said.

Not surprisingly, then, strengthening the nation's economy now tops the list of public policy priorities, just edging out defending against terrorism. Reducing health care costs is third, he said.

Concern about health care comes through even more strongly in surveys specifically devoted to consumer concerns, said Ed Farrell, Associate Director of *Consumer Reports* National Research Center.

When you look at the "hierarchy of consumer concerns," three of the top four are health-related, he said, with only gas prices emerging as a higher concern. Those top three health care concerns are costs, quality, and coverage for the uninsured, he said.

"Though there may be a debate about how a solution is reached, one thing is clear from this study is that the status quo is not acceptable," he said.

Despite that fact, how the issue is framed greatly influences the level of support, he said. "Language really does matter. The way you frame an issue, the way you talk about an issue, really does matter."

People respond poorly to the terms "universal coverage" and "cradle to grave," but well to the idea of giving people a helping hand and to the concept that "no one should be wiped out by a catastrophe," he said.

In addition, he said, "they keep on talking about an American solution. They don't want to be England or France."

# Congressional Perspectives on Consumer Priorities


Sen. Richard Durbin


Sen. Claire McCaskill


Sen. Mark Pryor


Rep. Bobby Rush

In a year that has seen significant progress on major consumer legislation, four key consumer advocates in Congress gave keynote speeches at Consumer Assembly ’08 in which they outlined their legislative priorities.

Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL) focused on two key priorities in his remarks – the need to address the worsening mortgage-related credit crisis and problems in the credit card market.

As a result of the sub-prime mortgage meltdown and its broader effects on the economy as a whole, roughly 2.2 million Americans are facing foreclosure, and approximately one-third of all private residences in America “will be negatively impacted,” he said.

Sen. Durbin is key author of a proposal, widely supported by consumer advocates including CFA, which would allow bankruptcy judges under certain circumstances to renegotiate the terms of mortgages on primary residences for consumers facing foreclosure.

“If this provision was in the bankruptcy code … before you even get to bankruptcy court the mortgagor would say, ‘Why even go to court? Why not do it ourselves” and renegotiate voluntarily, he said. “I think it would be a positive impact on the whole market scene.”

Sen. Durbin also discussed his efforts to provide credit card users with better information by mandating disclosure on account statements showing how long it would take, and how much interest the borrower would pay, if they paid off their balance making only minimum monthly payments.

The credit card companies have said it is impossible to calculate that, he said, “but they said the same thing about APR. We can’t accept these answers anymore. It’s not fair to consumers, and it really is not good for our economy.”

## Consumers Need Better Credit Information

Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-MO) also took up the call for better credit card disclosure during her keynote address.

“I understand that everyone needs credit, and these companies are not inherently evil,” she said, but she also argued that we need to do a better job of arming consumers with information “at the point of decision.”

The same is true for payday loans and reverse mortgages, she said, predicting that reverse mortgages represent “the next area where the consumer is really going to need to be on guard.”

Sen. McCaskill said the return of Banking Committee Chairman Christopher Dodd (D-CT) from the presidential campaign trail made it more likely that “good credit card legislation” would pass this year.

“I know it’s going to be hard,” she said. “I mean, look at the bankruptcy act. It makes you cynical.” But “people have power,” she added. “I think that the political pressure will build from the bottom up.”

## CPSC Called “Agency in Distress”

The CPSC reform legislation was the chief focus of remarks by Sen. Mark Pryor (D-AR) and Rep. Bobbie Rush (D-IL), chief sponsors of the Senate and House bills respectively.

“The Consumer Product Safety Commission is an agency in distress,” Sen. Pryor said. “It has been withering on the vine.”

Last year “was, unfortunately, a record year for unsafe and dangerous products in the American marketplace,” he added. All of the recalls that occurred had one positive side-effect, he said. They “helped raise awareness of members.”

Sen. Pryor praised the House CPSC reform bill, which passed the House unanimously last year, but said he thought the Senate can “make it stronger.”

Key areas where he said the Senate would look to strengthen the House bill were: giving state attorneys general enforcement authority, providing greater public disclosure of hazards, increasing fines, and strengthening whistleblower protections.

“We’re hoping that, at the end of the process here in the next few weeks …, that we will come out with a strong bill, a bipartisan bill,” he said.

## CPSC Reform Centerpiece of Safety Agenda

Rep. Rush said that, although the consumer protection subcommittee he chairs has worked on a variety of consumer issues, the CPSC reform legislation has been “the centerpiece of the subcommittee’s work in the first session.”

The fact that the House bill passed unanimously is “virtually unheard of. Unanimous votes are rare indeed for any bill, much less for major reform legislation like H.R. 4040,” he said.

By working with the Republicans and reaching out “to all stakeholders,” the House was able to develop legislation “that is at once aggressive, but at the same time balanced, far-reaching, but also workable.”

“We are hopeful that we will be able to confer with the Senate and have an agreed upon package of reforms on the president’s desk no later than this spring,” he added.

In the meantime, he said, the subcommittee is continuing to work on other important consumer issues.

“The subcommittee has been, and will continue to be, quite busy,” he said. “I’m looking forward to working with all of you as this subcommittee does some very, very important work, from protecting our youngest children from dangerous toys to protecting our oldest citizens from dangerous drugs.”

# Media Is Being Transformed by Internet Revolution

The migration of traditional news organizations to the Internet has created new challenges and opened new opportunities for the media, according to participants in a general session panel on “The Revolution in Consumer Information.”

“We’re in the middle of a revolution, a transformation in our industry,” said Jennifer Carroll, Vice President of New Media Content in the newspaper division of Gannett.

“Like most of the industry, we are seeing some serious circulation drops in print at the same time we are seeing some incredible opportunities on-line,” she said.

Illustrating her talk with examples from newspapers around the country, she said the focus of the organization has been “to harness the power of all the new technologies and tools that people are using to access information.”

## Encouraging a Conversation

A key goal, she said, is to do a better job of connecting with people in the community and bring them into the conversation. “Conversation is messy,” she said. “If it gets too sanitized we aren’t really getting to what people are thinking about.”

Jim Brady, Executive Editor of Washingtonpost.com, said that, since launching the site in 1996, they have tried to “push the boundaries of what’s possible and really be adventurous. We’ve tried really hard to try to figure out how to embrace this cult.”

Among the first lessons they learned, he said, is that, while traditional print journalism “is pretty one-sided” the Internet “breaks down those boundaries and allows you to have a real relationship with your readers.”

In addition, moving online has transformed the operation into a “multi-media” operation, with video, audio, photo galleries, and panoramic photos, operating in a way that can compete with television.

Another change is the increased use of databases, such as congressional voting records or crime statistics by neighborhood. “One of the things the web does wonderfully is allow you to take that data and mine it for what is important to you,” he said.

## Delivery Mechanisms Continue to Change

With the rising use of Blackberries and iPods, “People don’t necessarily want information on our website anymore,” he said. The new challenge, he said, is to figure out “how to get to people where they are as opposed to on our website.”

“The speed with which this changes is relentless,” he added.

Because *Consumer Reports* does not accept advertising, it has had to rely on paid content at a time when paid content appears to be on the wane, said Kevin McKean, Vice President and Editorial Director for Consumers Union.

Despite that key difference, many of the issues they are confronting are the same as those described by previous panelists, he said, such as finding ways to bring in more user-generated content and making more use of video.

One reason the paid content model has seemed to work for *Consumer Reports*, he said, is that it is a data-intensive publication and “data translates extremely well on-line.”

The biggest challenge they face right now is finding ways to expand the use of user-generated content, an area where there is still some resistance, he said.

“In the future, our hope is that our experts test things that only the experts can understand, but we use users to test things for usability,” he said.

Ultimately, McKean expressed confidence that journalism would adapt. “Journalism is going to be reinvented for this medium just as it has for every other one,” he said.

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CFAnews is published eight times a year.

 Design & Typeset by: Middour & Nolan Design

## Financial Crisis

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85 percent of current market value.

Although CFA welcomed the bill's passage, it has expressed concern that the program's reliance upon lender willingness to take a substantial haircut on mortgages could mean that the program would not reach many homeowners in imminent danger of losing their home through foreclosure.

The Congressional Budget Office has estimated, for example, that the bill would affect about 500,000 loans worth $85 billion, rather than up to two million homeowners, as first predicted, largely because some lenders may still prefer to foreclose.

### Loan Modification Reform Omitted

Moreover, the bill did not include the court-supervised loan modification reform sought by CFA and other consumer and housing advocates, despite the fact that Rep. Steve Chabot (R-OH) and Rep. John Conyers (D-MI) have developed a bipartisan compromise proposal on the mortgage bankruptcy issue.

Proposed as a substitute for H.R. 3609, it would allow bankruptcy courts to:

- reduce the principal on mortgages to reflect the current value of the home, while providing a vehicle for lenders to recover the full fair market value;
- reset interest rates to affordable-but-fair levels; and
- eliminate many abusive fees.

It would only apply to existing subprime and non-traditional loans, it would sunset after seven years, and it would only apply if foreclosure is imminent.

CFA joined with more than 30 other consumer, housing, and civil rights organizations to urge that this measure be added to any final floor package to deal with the housing crisis.

Even without the bankruptcy reform measure attached, the House housing bill drew a presidential veto threat. And, although the bill drew some Republican support, it was not sufficient to override a veto.

### Treasury's Regulatory Reform Proposal Fails to Address Crisis

Meanwhile, just weeks after having to broker the fire sale of Bear Stearns, the once powerful investment bank teetering on the verge of bankruptcy, the Treasury Department rolled out a "Blueprint for Regulatory Reform" in March that failed to address, or even acknowledge, the underlying causes of ineffective regulation that led to the current credit crisis.

The blueprint is primarily a plan for reorganizing and consolidating federal financial regulatory functions.

It would, for example, expand the Federal Reserve's risk management responsibility to include investment banks as well as commercial banks, and it would create a new business conduct regulator with responsibility for writing and enforcing consumer protection rules for the banking, insurance, and securities industries.

While some such structural changes may make sense, they would do nothing to address the current financial crisis, or even to prevent similar crises in the future, CFA charged.

"As Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson has acknowledged, faults in our financial regulatory structure did not cause the current market turmoil," said CFA Director of Investor Protection Barbara Roper.

"In fact, it was regulators' mindless belief that the market is always right that made them deaf to warnings of risks in the subprime mortgage market, blind to the fact that securitization didn't so much reduce risk as spread it into every corner of the marketplace, and unwilling to use the authority at their disposal to rein in those risks," she added.

"Until that attitude changes, consumers and investors are unlikely to see any benefits from changes in the regulatory structure," she added.

### Anti-Regulatory Bias Pervades Plan

In fact, however, that anti-regulatory bias continues to pervade the Treasury plan. For example, the plan proposes a merger between the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Commodities Futures Trading Commission, but warns that the CFTC's lighter touch regulatory style should prevail.

It also suggests greater reliance on industry self-regulatory organizations and less government oversight over those industry regulatory groups.

And it proposes an optional federal charter for insurance companies that CFA and other consumer advocates have condemned as encouraging regulatory arbitrage and a race to the bottom in regulatory standards.

"Congress and the next administration will need to review these and other proposals very carefully to separate the good from the bad," Plunkett said.

"More important, they will need to recognize that any structural changes that are not accompanied by adequate resources and regulatory authority and are not implemented by independent regulators with the will to regulate will do nothing to reform the real weaknesses in our regulatory system," he added.

**On the Web**

http://www.consumerfed.org/pdfs/S_2636_cloture_vote_letter_FINAL.pdf
www.consumerfed.org/pdfs/Shared_Principles_on_Mortgage_4-23-08.pdf
www.consumerfed.org/pdfs/HR_3609_Support_Letter_04-22-08.pdf
www.consumerfed.org/pdfs/sign-on_support_Waters_foreclosure_bill_3-31-08.pdf
www.consumerfed.org/pdfs/CFA_statement_on_Treasury_blueprint_3-31-08.pdf

## CFA Mourns the Loss of Chairman Metzenbaum

Members and staff of CFA were greatly saddened by the death in March of its Chairman, retired Senator Howard M. Metzenbaum. Sen. Metzenbaum had served as Chairman of CFA since his retirement from the Senate. He worked out of CFA's Washington, D.C. offices from 1995 to 2005, when he moved to Florida.

"No one in the U.S. Senate ever fought so fearlessly and effectively for the interests of ordinary consumers," said CFA Executive Director Stephen Brobeck. "And he continued this energetic and influential consumer advocacy after joining CFA."

During two decades in the Senate, Metzenbaum championed the consumer interest on a wide range of issues, both by pushing pro-consumer bills and working to stop anti-consumer measures. On defense, he was an adamant opponent of efforts to weaken the Federal Trade Commission.

He also introduced and shepherded to passage, and finally law, measures such as the Nutrition Information and Labeling Act of 1990, which required standardized nutrition labels on foods for the first time, and the Cable Act of 1992, which re-regulated cable TV rates. As Chairman of the Senate Antitrust Subcommittee, he relentlessly sought to curb anti-competitive practices in industries ranging from energy to insurance.

After joining CFA as a non-profit consumer advocate, Metzenbaum continued working on many of the same issues. He frequently testified before Congress, communicated personally with congressional members, was interviewed by the press, and mobilized support within the consumer advocacy community. This advocacy was instrumental in the eight-year delay in passage of restrictive bankruptcy legislation, for example, and in congressional approval of generic drug legislation.

"Sen. Metzenbaum quickly became the most prominent consumer advocate in Washington after joining CFA," said CFA Legislative Director Travis Plunkett. "He used the same hard-charging, hard-working style to effectively lobby his former colleagues, build coalitions, and speak frequently to the national media. His achievements during this time add to an extraordinary record on behalf of ordinary consumers."

When he relocated to Florida in 2005, Metzenbaum was greatly missed by consumer advocates he had advised and encouraged, as well as by all the CFA staffers who had associated with him daily. Yet, even away from D.C., Metzenbaum communicated frequently with CFA advocates on issues.

"Sen. Metzenbaum was one of the most progressive forces in American society in the latter half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first," Brobeck said. "We at CFA were greatly privileged to have worked with him and to have called him colleague and friend."

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**Save the Date!!**

**Awards Dinner** – June 19, 2008
**National Food Policy Conference** – September 8-9, 2008
**Financial Services Conference** – December 4-5, 2008
**Consumer Assembly 2009** – March 12-13, 2009