

**Center for Environmental Health • Center for Justice and
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Contact:

Rachel Weintraub, CFA (202) 387-6121

Sally Greenberg, Consumers Union (202) 462-6262

Laura MacCleery, Public Citizen (202)588-1000

**Michael Baroody is the Wrong Person for the Job, Consumer
Groups Warn**

***Groups Document Highlights Why President Bush's Pick Should Not Be
Confirmed for Nation's Top Consumer Product Safety Position***

WASHINGTON, D.C. – President Bush's nominee Michael Baroody is the wrong choice to head the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), the nation's top consumer product safety agency, a coalition of consumer groups warned today. The organizations – Center for Environmental Health, Center for Justice and Democracy, Consumer Federation of America, Consumers Union, Kids in Danger, Public Citizen, Saferparks and, U.S. PIRG – released documents showing that Mr. Baroody has overseen efforts to weaken safety proposals pending before the Commission as a top executive at the National Association of Manufacturers and has failed to demonstrate a commitment to protecting the public from product safety hazards.

There are more than 27,000 deaths and 33 million injuries each year associated with consumer products under CPSC's jurisdiction. President Bush announced Mr. Baroody's nomination to the chairmanship of the CPSC on March 1st. Mr. Baroody is currently the executive vice president of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), where he has overseen efforts to dilute safety proposals pending before the Commission and to weaken the very agency he is now nominated to head.

“The CPSC Chairman should champion product safety and work to uphold the mission of the agency without predisposition or bias,” stated Rachel Weintraub, Director of Product Safety and Senior Counsel with Consumer Federation of America. “Mr. Baroody's record of advancing a public policy agenda that would weaken health and safety protections for consumers makes him ill-suited to lead a critical federal safety agency like the CPSC. It is difficult to believe that Mr. Baroody could suddenly reverse course and oppose initiatives that would harm consumers.”

“Mr. Baroody is a poor choice to head an agency responsible for overseeing the safety of children's toys, clothing and nursery products. The well being of our kids is too

important to turn it over to someone who has always taken the industry side where safety is concerned,” said Sally Greenberg, Senior Product Safety Counsel for Consumers Union.

“Time and time again, faced with product safety and public health issues, Mr. Baroody has sided against consumers,” said Joan Claybrook, president of Public Citizen. “His work has degraded safety and eroded hard-won public health protections.”

Mr. Baroody directs NAM’s public policy agenda. NAM, with at least 14,000 corporate members, represents the nation’s largest manufacturing firms on Capitol Hill, before the executive branch and in the courts. Consumer groups could find no evidence that NAM or Mr. Baroody have ever advocated for stronger regulatory safeguards. While Mr. Baroody was leading NAM’s advocacy efforts, he and NAM’s CPSC Coalition pursued a number of anti-consumer activities:

- Opposed a CPSC proposal to improve safety standards for baby walkers. Instead, NAM blamed parents for improperly supervising their children;
- Opposed a petition from consumer organizations to improve the way the consumers find out about recalls of potentially dangerous children’s products;
- Supported diluting guidelines companies used to determine whether they must report substantial product hazards; and
- Urged New York Governor George Pataki to veto legislation that mandated fire safe cigarettes.

“We are concerned that someone with Mr. Baroody's background will not be able to be the champion for safety that our children need,” stated Nancy Cowles, Executive Director of Kids in Danger. “Whether it is keeping dangerous children's products off the store shelves or getting them out of our homes and child care facilities after they have been recalled, we are looking for a CPSC Chairman who will put kids first.”

“Michael Baroody’s nomination is putting the fox in the henhouse and that’s the wrong decision for America’s safety,” said Ed Mierzwinski, Consumer Program Director with the U.S. Public Interest Research Group (U.S. PIRG).

Created by Congress in 1972, the CPSC has the authority to set safety standards, require labeling, order recalls, ban products, collect death and injury data, inform the public about consumer product safety and contribute to the voluntary standards setting process. It has at least 15,000 consumer products under its jurisdiction, including many of the products that are used by children – including strollers, swings, cribs, high chairs, baby walkers and toys.

“The agency’s work is highly technical, deals in life-and-death issues and, at times, sparks intense confrontations with manufacturers, stated Kathy Fackler of Saferparks. “Nothing in Mr. Baroody’s resume suggests he is qualified for this position. Chairmanship of this agency requires the ability to focus on the well-being of consumers

rather than the economic growth of manufacturers. I do not believe that Mr. Baroody is the right choice to carry out that important role.”

Since the 1980s, the agency has been slowly starved of staff and resources. While there has been an exponential increase in consumer products since its creation more than 30 years ago, CPSC’s staff is projected to be cut to 401 full time employees (FTEs) this year – which would be an all-time low and less than half than the number of people employed by the agency in the 1970s. Additionally, its budget measured in real dollars has plummeted.

“Revelations that the CPSC has been asleep at the wheel on issues like lead in children’s lunchboxes show that we need renewed leadership at the agency,” stated Alexa Engelman of the Center for Environmental Health, “Confirming Mr. Baroody, who has advocated to reduce consumer safety regulations for industry, would further weaken the Commission’s ability to protect consumers.”

The American public, under law, must have a CPSC Chairman who has the expertise and commitment to put consumer protection and child safety first,” the groups said. “We urge members of Congress to reject this inappropriate nomination.”

To read the coalition’s report and other materials, visit http://www.citizen.org/documents/CPSC_Barooddy_white_paper.pdf.

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Center for Environmental Health (<http://www.cehca.org/>) is an advocate for public health that prevents pollution and protects children, families and communities from toxic chemicals. Center for Justice and Democracy (<http://www.centerjd.org/>) The Center for Justice & Democracy is a non-profit, tax-exempt group, founded by consumer advocates to protect the civil justice system. Consumer Federation of America (<http://www.consumerfed.org>) is a nonprofit association of 300 consumer groups and, a combined membership of more than 50 million people dedicated to advancing the consumers’ interest through advocacy and education. Consumer’s Union (<http://www.consumersunion.org>) is an independent, nonprofit organization based in New York which publishes Consumer Reports. Kids in Danger (<http://www.kidsindanger.org/>) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting children by improving children’s product safety. Public Citizen (<http://www.citizen.org>) is a national, nonprofit consumer advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C. Safer Parks (<http://www.saferparks.org/>) is a public 501(c)(3) charity. Your tax-deductible donation will support Saferparks’ public service mission to prevent amusement ride injuries through research, information sharing, and advocacy. U.S. PIRG (<http://www.uspirg.org>) is the Boston-based federation of state Public Interest Research Groups.