

***Consumers Union * Consumer Federation of America *
* Kids in Danger * Union of Concerned Scientists *
* U.S. Public Interest Research Group * Public Citizen *
* National Research Center for Women & Families ***

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Consumer Groups Applaud President for Signing Strong Product Safety Bill into Law

Washington, D.C.—Today, consumer, public interest and scientific groups applaud President Bush for signing product safety reform legislation into law that will overhaul the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). The bi-partisan Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008, passed overwhelmingly by the House on July 30, 2008 by a vote of 424-1 and by the Senate on July 31, 2008 by a vote of 89-3. This critical new law will make consumer products safer by requiring that toys and infant products be tested before they are sold, and by banning lead and phthalates in toys. The bill also will create the first comprehensive publicly accessible consumer complaint database, give the CPSC the resources it needs to protect the public, increase civil penalties that CPSC can assess against violators of CPSC laws, and protect whistleblowers who report product safety defects.

In approving this sweeping reform measure, Congress and the Senate put children's and consumers' safety first by enacting the most significant improvements of the Consumer Product Safety Commission since the agency was established in the 1970's.

“This Act is the legacy of the countless children, including Danny Keysar - whose parents founded Kids In Danger - who have been killed or injured by unsafe children's products and toys,” stated Nancy Cowles, Executive Director of Kids In Danger. “It is to honor their memories that we must now undertake the implementation of this landmark measure.”

A key portion of the legislation, dealing with the safety of juvenile products such as cribs, high chairs and strollers, is named in Danny Keysar's honor.

“This new product safety law is responsive to the mounting evidence and dire consequences of our broken product safety net. This bill patches up our current system by giving the CPSC the resources, regulatory authority and enforcement tools it needs to protect consumer from hazards posed by unsafe products,” stated Rachel Weintraub, Director of Product Safety and Senior Counsel with Consumer Federation of America. “We applaud Congress and the President for supporting this critical reform and urge the CPSC to implement this law effectively.”

“This long-overdue law gives the CPSC the shot in the arm that it desperately needs,” said Ami Gadhia, Policy Counsel with Consumers Union. “It is now up to the CPSC to use the tools given to them by this law, and restore the confidence of consumers in the products on store shelves,” added Gadhia.

"This is a huge victory for consumers over big business," said David Arkush, Director of Public Citizen's Congress Watch division. "This law puts safety first by making new and important changes, like requiring that toys be tested for safety before they are sold and creating an Internet database where consumers can share information about dangerous products."

“Protecting America’s littlest consumers better was always a good idea, but now it’s the law,” said U.S. PIRG Consumer Program Director Ed Mierzwinski. “We look forward to working with a stronger CPSC with more tools at its disposal.” U.S. PIRG Public Health Advocate Liz Hitchcock added, “We especially appreciate the visionary features of the new law, such as its ban on toxic phthalate chemicals in children’s products and its creation of a revolutionary new publicly-accessible database of potential hazards.”

“This new law is a significant victory for families,” said Dr. Diana Zuckerman, President of the National Research Center for Women & Families. “For the first time, it bans several chemicals from children's toys at the same time it requires more research be conducted on those chemicals, rather than allowing potentially dangerous exposures while research is underway. I hope the message is clear: chemical companies can not neglect their responsibility to do well-designed safety research and then use the lack of evidence of risk as a justification to sell potentially dangerous products.” Zuckerman added that several phthalates, chemicals used to make plastic flexible, have been linked to human reproductive problems and to liver and kidney cancers in animals.

“We hope the enactment of this law marks the beginning of an era of more transparency and scientific integrity, not only at the CPSC, but all federal agencies,” said Dr. Francesca T. Grifo, director, Scientific Integrity Program, Union of Concerned Scientists.

The consumer organizations congratulate the work of the House and Senate Conferees and their staff who worked tirelessly to reconcile the House and Senate versions of this bill. Their work resulted in the passage and enactment of the strongest and most comprehensive product safety reform in decades. The House and Senate Conferees were: Chairman Daniel Inouye (D-HI), Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK), Chairman Mark Pryor (D-AR) , Senator John Sununu (R-NH) , Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX), Chairman John Dingell (D-MI), Representative Joe Barton (R-TX), Chairman Bobby Rush (D-IL), Representative Cliff Stearns (R-FL), Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Representative Henry Waxman (D-CA), Representative Diana DeGette (D-CO), and Representative Edward Whitfield (R-KY).

The groups also thank Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL), Senator Claire McCaskill (D-MO) , Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Representative DeLauro (D-CT), Representative Louise Slaughter (D-NY), Representative Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) and Representative Keith Ellison (D-MN) as well as Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), Senate Majority Whip Richard Durbin (D-IL) Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), and House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) for their critical work on this bill.

Here are some examples of how the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008 changes and improves the safety of products sold in the United States:

- Lead will be essentially eliminated from toys and children's products.
- Consumers will have access to a publicly-accessible database to report and learn about hazards posed by unsafe products.
- Toys and other children's products will be required to be tested for safety before they are sold.
- State Attorneys General will have the necessary authority to enforce product safety laws.
- CPSC has the authority to levy more significant civil penalties against violators of its safety regulations, which will help deter wrongdoing.
- Toxic phthalates will be banned from children's products.
- Whistleblowers will be granted important protections.
- CPSC will receive substantial increases in its resources – including its staffing levels, its laboratory and computer resources and its various authorities to conduct recalls and take other actions - going forward.

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Consumer Federation of America (consumerfed.org); Consumers Union (consumersunion.org); Kids In Danger (kidsindanger.org); National Research Center For Women & Families (center4research.org); Public Citizen (citizen.org); U.S. PIRG (uspirg.org)