

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

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Consumer Groups Applaud Senate on Passage of Strong Bi-Partisan Product Safety Legislation;

Consumers, Businesses Will Benefit from Greater Confidence in Marketplace

Washington, DC—Today, consumer, public interest and scientific groups applauded the U.S. Senate for passage of the sweeping Consumer Product Safety Reform Act, S. 2663. This bi-partisan legislation represents the most significant improvement in almost two decades to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), the agency that oversees the safety of more than 15,000 consumer products in the United States. The groups praised the leadership of Senators Mark Pryor (D-AR), Ted Stevens (R-AK) and Daniel Inouye (D-HI) for their efforts in reaching this major accomplishment.

“After 2007 became the Year of the Recall, consumers’ confidence in our product safety system was dashed,” said Ami Gadhia, Policy Counsel for Consumers Union. “In today’s climate of partisan politics, it is great to see the Senate come together to protect children and consumers in this global marketplace. This legislation will help to make our products safer, give consumers vital and timely information about emerging problems, and help restore the public’s faith in the products they buy for their families every day.”

“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,” stated Rachel Weintraub, Director of Product Safety and Senior Counsel for Consumer Federation of America. “We congratulate the Senate for passing the Consumer Product Safety Commission Reform Act, which patches the holes in our nation’s safety net. Consumers have been waiting for these necessary reforms.”

The Consumer Product Safety Reform Act, S. 2663 as passed today, will do the following: increase CPSC’s budget over the next seven years to \$155 million; 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; lower lead levels in children’s products; and protect CPSC staff and private-sector employees who blow the whistle on wrongdoing.

The groups acknowledge the importance of marrying the strong reforms of the Senate bill with key provisions in the House product safety bill passed in December. In particular, the groups highlight the Senate’s provisions addressing the public database, State AG enforcement and whistleblower protections. The groups will urge conferees to keep these provisions, while also adopting a critical House measure that ensures product testing of more children’s products by defining such products as those designed for children under 12 years of age. The Senate bill covers products designed for children under seven years of age.

“Better product safety requires a comprehensive approach – fewer toxic toys, more money and authority for the CPSC, more disclosure to the public of hazards, more enforcement by state attorneys general and more independent testing of toys and other children’s products,” said Ed Mierzwinski, U.S. PIRG Consumer Program Director. “We intend to work with the House and Senate to quickly package the best elements of both their bills into a final bi-partisan law.”

“Kids In Danger was founded 10 years ago after the death of Danny Keysar in an untested, unsafe portable crib. We applaud the Senate for passing this bill which will fix the flawed children’s product safety system that led to Danny’s death -- it will save lives,” said Nancy Cowles, Executive Director, Kids In Danger.

“CPSC staff and those who work in the private sector are on the front lines in our efforts to protect the public from unsafe products. By including whistleblower protections in this bill, the Senate recognizes that when employees sound the alert about product safety violations, they should be heard and should not have to fear retaliation,” said Celia Wexler, Washington Representative, Union of Concerned Scientists.

“The Senate bill is a real step forward for consumers, and we’re thankful for the hard work of Senators Pryor, Durbin, Inouye, and Stevens,” said David Arkush, director of Public Citizen’s Congress Watch division. “But this bill doesn’t finish the job. Even with this legislation, the CPSC still will need more authority to make mandatory safety rules, to order swift mandatory recalls of hazardous products, and enforce the law with stiff penalties. We look forward to working with Congress to make even greater improvements to the CPSC.”

“This bill took a lot of hard work to pass,” said Paul Brown, Government Relations Manager for the National Research Center for Women & Families. “It was far from child’s play. But your child’s playtime will be safer because of this bill. It lowers lead levels in children’s products and it requires mandatory toy safety standards.”