

***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 House Passage of Strong Product Safety Bill; *Urge Senate to Pass Reform Measure this week*

Washington, D.C.—Today, consumer, public interest and scientific groups applaud the U.S. House of Representatives for passing strong product safety reform legislation that would overhaul the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). The bi-partisan Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act 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 a 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, the House of Representatives put children's and consumer's safety first by enacting the most significant improvements of the Consumer Product Safety Commission since the agency was established in the 1970's. The Senate must vote on this measure this week, before the August recess, the groups urged.

“After CPSC has suffered death by a thousand cuts, the House gave the Commission a new life with increased resources, authority and transparency to better ensure the safety of consumer products. We urge the Senate to complete this vital task and pass this unprecedented product safety reform this week before August recess,” said Rachel Weintraub, Director of Product Safety and Senior Counsel with Consumer Federation of America.

“The countdown to safer products has hopefully begun in earnest today with the bi-partisan House passage of sweeping product safety reforms. The Senate must also pass this legislation this week, and the President should sign on the dotted line so that the overhaul of the beleaguered CPSC can finally start. That's when consumers will start to have more confidence in the safety of the products they buy,” said Ami Gadhia, Policy Counsel with Consumers Union.

“We applaud the House for recognizing that toxic chemicals like lead and phthalates have no business in our children's toys,” said U.S. PIRG Public Health Advocate Elizabeth Hitchcock.

“This bill is a huge victory for America's littlest consumers in the face of ExxonMobil and the chemical industry’s efforts to gut it. The Senate should waste no time in sending it to the President’s desk.”

"House passage of this bill brings critical safety reforms to within steps of the finish line," said David Arkush, Director of Public Citizen's Congress Watch division. "Now the Senate needs to finish the job."

“The House did the right thing by banning phthalates—chemicals that may be associated with reproductive problems and cancer—in children’s toys and products,” said Dr. Diana Zuckerman, president of the National Research Center for Women and Families. “The House put children’s safety first.”

“Scientists working on consumer product safety will also benefit from this new legislation,” said Dr. Francesca T. Grifo, director, Scientific Integrity Program, Union of Concerned Scientists. “A stronger Inspector General and a website for CPSC employees to anonymously report their concerns, along with whistleblower protections for those who report about unsafe products, will contribute to more transparency and accountability at this agency,” added Grifo.

“With today’s House passage of the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act, we are one step closer to establishing a child safety system that will keep our children safe from tainted toys and collapsing cribs,” stated Nancy Cowles, executive director of Kids In Danger. “We now urge the Senate and the President to act swiftly to get these life-saving measures in place.”

The House and Senate conferees on the product safety measure concluded action this weekend. The conference report on the legislation must now be approved by the President for his signature. Here are some examples of how this legislation 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)