



PRESS RELEASE
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**CHICAGOANS USE 30-FOOT RUBBER DUCKIE TO SEND MESSAGE TO CONGRESS:
PROTECT OUR KIDS FROM TOXIC TOYS**

Chicago, Ill. – Chicago parents, children and children’s health advocates came together today at Union Park to “dump” toxic toys and call on Congress to support legislation protecting kids from dangerous chemicals.

Lead contamination in toys prompted mass recalls last year, but toxic chemicals called phthalates are also widespread in toys and other children’s products, and are still legal in most states. Phthalates have been linked to a number of serious health problems including birth defects, early puberty in girls (a risk factor for breast cancer) and testicular cancer. Right now in Washington, DC, the U.S. Senate and House are debating a consumer protection bill that includes a ban on the use of these toxic chemicals in children’s toys.

“Parents have enough to be anxious about,” said local mom Stephanie Felten. “We shouldn’t have to worry that we might be exposing our kids to a dose of toxic chemicals when we hand them their favorite teething ring or rubber duck. We should be able to trust that products manufactured and sold in the United States are safe.”

Phthalates make plastic toys like rubber ducks and bath books soft and flexible. When kids put these toys in their mouths, the phthalates can easily leach from toy to child. A ban on the use of phthalates in children’s toys and childcare articles was recently included in the U.S. Senate’s version of the Consumer Product Safety Commission Reform Act, but the House version of the bill had no such ban. U.S. Representatives Bobby Rush (D-Illinois) and Jan Schakowsky (D-Illinois) have been appointed to serve on the small, bi-partisan Conference Committee that will decide whether the ban is included in the final legislation. They will be key voices in determining whether kids across the nation are protected from these dangerous chemicals.

“Representatives Rush and Schakowsky are both strong advocates for children’s health and safety. And now they have an opportunity to continue this leadership by ensuring that the ban on phthalates in children’s products becomes law. Chicago parents and parents everywhere are counting on them,” said Brian Imus, Director of Illinois PIRG (Public Interest Research Group).

“Parents’ ability to protect our children shouldn’t depend on where we live or shop,” said Sarah Chusid, Program Director of Kids In Danger. “We need strong federal product safety laws that protect all children.”

“California and Washington have banned phthalates in toys, and ten other states have introduced similar measures,” said Janet Nudelman, Director of Program and Policy for the Breast Cancer Fund. “Now, Congress has the opportunity to make sure kids in every state are protected from toxic chemicals in their toys.”

Phthalates are currently banned or restricted in the European Union and more than a dozen countries around the world including France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Austria, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Mexico, Norway and Sweden. Retailers and manufacturers including Wal-Mart, Toys-R-Us, Lego, Evenflo and Gerber have recently announced that they will phase out or eliminate phthalates due to parent concern.

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