

News Release
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Media contacts:

David Butler, Consumers Union, 202-719-5916, dbutler@consumer.org
Rachel Weintraub, Consumer Federation of America, 202-904-4953, rweintraub@consumerfed.org
Nancy A. Cowles, Kids In Danger, 312-595-0649, nancy@kidsindanger.org
Christine Hines, Public Citizen, 202-454-5135, chines@citizen.org
Celia Wexler, Union of Concerned Scientists, 202-390-5481, CWexler@ucsusa.org
Liz Hitchcock, U.S. Public Interest Research Group, 202-461-3826, elizabeth@pirg.org

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Citizen · Union of Concerned Scientists ·
U.S. Public Interest Research Group**

Important Consumer Tool Passes Final Hurdle

Groups Praise CPSC Vote for Consumer Product Safety Information Database Database will be online in March 2011

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- A coalition of consumer and safety groups today praised the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) for voting to implement the Consumer Product Safety Information Database that would allow people to share and access safety information about the products they own and consider buying.

The groups -- Consumer Federation of America, Consumers Union, Kids in Danger, Public Citizen, Union of Concerned Scientists, and the U.S. Public Interest Research Group -- hailed the vote as a major step forward in educating consumers about product safety hazards and improving the CPSC's ability to identify and act on problems in the marketplace.

The database is required under the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA) approved by Congress and signed by President Bush in 2008. The database cleared its final hurdle today as the CPSC voted 3-2 in favor of a rule to implement the database, which is now scheduled to be online and available to the public starting in March 2011. The database will be online at SaferProducts.gov.

The CPSC currently collects safety complaints from consumers, but it is required to ask permission from manufacturers and private labelers before it can communicate with the public about a product they make. Typically, the only information that consumers can find online relates to previous recalls of products. The consumer complaint database will help shed light on the safety of products currently in the marketplace, and it is carefully designed to ensure that the information is accurate.

Ami Gadhia, policy counsel for Consumers Union, the nonprofit publisher of *Consumer Reports* magazine, said, "Consumers deserve to know the safety record of the products they buy. This database will be a great tool for consumers, and it has the necessary safeguards against incorrect information. It strikes a good balance between consumers' needs and companies' concerns."

Rachel Weintraub, Director of Product Safety and Senior Counsel at Consumer Federation of America, stated, "We strongly support CPSC's final rule implementing the database as a major leap

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forward in the effort to increase consumer access to useful product safety information. As a result of the commitment to the effectiveness of the database by CPSC, consumers will have access to lifesaving information and the agency will more nimbly be able to identify and act upon safety hazards.”

Nancy Cowles, executive director of Kids In Danger, a nonprofit dedicated to protecting children from unsafe products, added, “The new database will help keep children safe -- allowing parents to learn about hazards before they purchase a new stroller or crib, rather than when the product is recalled months or years later,” added “Public access to information is a cost effective way for government to improve safety. Not only can parents report problems and learn of other consumers’ experiences, but CPSC and manufacturers will have an additional incentive to address safety concerns expediently.”

Christine Hines, Public Citizen’s consumer and civil justice counsel, agreed. “In 2008, Public Citizen found that it took an average of nearly 8 months for the CPSC and manufacturers to warn the public about hazardous products in cases where the Commission levied fines against manufacturers. A vigorous online database will close this gap because consumers will be included in the conversation on recognizing potentially dangerous products. Before the CPSIA, that conversation was primarily an exclusive one between industry and the agency.”

Liz Hitchcock, U.S. PIRG Public Health Advocate, said, “SaferProducts.gov will enable consumers to make safer purchases for our families.”

Celia Wexler, Washington Representative, Scientific Integrity Program, Union of Concerned Scientists, said, "The new database strengthens the transparency of CPSC and will enable scientists and researchers, both inside and outside the agency, to spot trends early and pro-actively. The ability to respond to problems before product defects harm scores of consumers benefits both the public and businesses.”
