

Washington, DC -- In response to recent waves of toy recalls and in time for the upcoming holiday shopping season, U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) joined the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) to release NYPIRG's 22nd annual toy safety survey and highlight legislation cosponsored by Arcuri to strengthen and improve the Consumer Product Safety Commission, increase lead testing, and expand criminal penalties for producers of hazardous toys.

“Recent national recalls of Chinese-made, lead-contaminated toys are a wake-up call that we must toughen consumer protection laws and protect our kids from unsafe toys this holiday season,” **said Arcuri**. “That’s why I commend NYPIRG for their work on this important topic, why I’m cosponsoring the SAFE Consumer Product Act, and why I will continue to work in Congress to ensure that the federal government is doing its job, informing parents of potential hazards and keeping unsafe toys off the shelves.”

In recent weeks, consumers have been shocked by recalls of toys and consumer products, many due to lead contamination. The Safety Assurance for Every (SAFE) Consumer Protection Act (H.R 3691) would strengthen and improve the Consumer Protection Product Safety Act to ensure products, especially children’s toys, are completely safe and reliable.

“While we have seen progress after more than two decades of advocacy on behalf of America’s littlest consumers, U.S. PIRG’s researchers still found trouble in toyland on store shelves this month,” **said Fran Clark, NYPIRG Program Coordinator**. “But recent high profile product recalls show we still need to urge Congress to pass strong product safety reforms.”

According to the most recent data from the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), toy-related injuries sent almost 73,000 children under the age of five to emergency rooms in 2005. Twenty children died from toy-related injuries that year. For 22 years, the NYPIRG’s Trouble in Toyland report has offered safety guidelines for purchasing toys for small children and provides examples of toys currently on store shelves that pose potential safety hazards.

The 2007 research focused on several categories of toy dangers: toys that pose choking hazards, toys with powerful magnets, toys that contain lead, and toys that pose strangulation hazards.

Among the findings of NYPIRG's 2007 "Trouble in Toyland" Toy Safety Report:

Lead in Toys and Children's Jewelry: Children exposed to lead can suffer lowered IQ, delayed mental and physical development and even death. In 2006, a four year old died of lead poisoning after he swallowed a bracelet charm that contained 99% lead. U.S. PIRG researchers went to just a few stores and easily found four children's toys or jewelry containing high, actionable levels of lead. One piece of jewelry we found was 65% lead by weight, or over one thousand times current CPSC action levels.

Magnetic Toys: Toymakers have started using powerful magnets in building toys, magnetic jewelry and children's playsets. If a child swallows more than one magnet, they can attract each other in the body and cause a bowel obstruction or life-threatening perforation. A 22-month old boy died in 2005 and many others have needed life-saving surgery after swallowing magnets. This year, the CPSC has recalled popular Mattel toys, including Barbie and Polly Pockets, for poorly designed magnets that fall out. Listed in the report are several examples of sloppily-designed or poorly-labeled magnetic toys found by PIRG researchers this fall.

Choking Hazards: In 1979, the CPSC banned the sale of toys for children younger than three if they contain small parts. The 1994 Child Safety Protection Act required an explicit choke hazard warning on toys with small parts for children aged between three and six.

Arcuri is a cosponsor of the SAFE Consumer Product Act (H.R.3691), sponsored by Rep. DeLauro (Conn.), and strongly supported by NYPIRG.

This comprehensive bill would increase resources for the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and make third-party testing of toys and children's products for compliance with safety standards mandatory. Currently, the CPSC is severely understaffed – having lost, and failed to replace, 15 percent of its workforce since 2004. Additionally, CPSC presently only employs one full-time toy tester.

The SAFE Act would:

- Require children's products undergo independent third-part testing
- Expand civil and criminal penalties
- Ban lead in children's products
- Enhance CPSC recall and inspection authority
- Expedite recall disclosure to the public
- Ask the President to fill Commission vacancies
- Provide additional resources to the CPSC

More information on toy safety is available at toysafety.net and <http://www.nypirg.org/> .

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