

Statement from Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (IL-9)

February 9, 2015

Press Conference releasing new KID report

Thank you for joining us here today. I am so pleased to be here to discuss Kids In Danger's latest annual report on product recalls.

I'd like to give a special thanks to Nancy Cowles, the Executive Director of Kids in Danger, for her outstanding leadership in educating parents and caregivers about the dangers of certain products, promoting the development of safer children's products, and advocating for important legislative and regulatory improvements.

I am also pleased to be here alongside Attorney General Lisa Madigan, who has been a consistent champion in protecting Illinois consumers against unsafe products. Her office has been instrumental in warning Illinoisans about dangerous products, and in removing those products from store shelves.

This year's report is full of good news. We continue to see major progress in the safety of children's products, with a 34% reduction in children's product recalls from 2013. The 75 children's product recalls was the lowest number in more than a decade. That progress is in large part due to the implementation of the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA), which became law in 2008.

The CPSIA was the most significant reform of the Consumer Product Safety Commission and its responsibilities in decades.

The CPSIA passed on a bipartisan basis (unanimously in the House) and gave the Consumer Product Safety Commission the authority and resources necessary to become the consumer watchdog that Americans deserve.

With Nancy's counsel, I authored several provisions to the bill. I am particularly proud of a provision requiring mandatory standards and testing for infant and toddler products such as cribs and high chairs, as well as a requirement for postage-paid recall registration cards to be attached to products so that customers can be quickly notified if products are dangerous.

The CPSIA also included mandatory toy safety standards – including banning lead and dangerous phthalates in toys – which are preventing injuries and saving lives. Thanks to the law, the United States has the strongest toy safety standards in the world.

But today's report shows there is a lot of work yet to be done. Clothing products accounted for the most children's product recalls for the second consecutive year. The largest recall of 2014 involved strollers that trapped kids' fingers in hinges – sometimes resulting in finger amputations. The most common hazard for children's products is a risk of choking – an issue that consumer advocates and the CPSC have been focusing on for a long time. In 2015, I hope and expect the CPSC to be able to continue its strong oversight, and for manufacturers to build and sell the safest products yet, leading to further reductions in product safety recalls.

Last year, the CPSC welcomed Elliot Kaye as its new Chairman. Mr. Kaye has focused in his first 6 months on the job on maintaining the Commission's record of improvement in preventing unsafe products from reaching consumers, increasing research into and action to promote brain safety – especially for youth sports, and restricting imports of products that contain dangerous chemicals. I have enjoyed working with him so far and look forward to advancing consumer safety in the years ahead. I will continue to work to ensure that CPSC has the resources needed to do its important work.

I'm sure we all agree – there is no compromising on our children's safety. I am absolutely committed to protecting families and all consumers from dangerous products, and I will continue to work with consumers, advocates, and the CPSC to achieve those goals.