

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 3, 2007

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Karen Lightfoot (Waxman): (202) 225-5051

Sharon Jenkins /

Toure Muhammad (Rush): (202) 225-4372

Rebecca Gale (Carney): (202) 225-3731

Rick Jauert (Ellison): (202) 225-4755

Amy Brundage (Obama): (202) 228-5511

LEGISLATION INTRODUCED TO BAN LEAD IN TOYS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Citing recent recalls and the longtime failure of the Consumer Product Safety Commission to protect children from hazardous levels of lead in consumer products, Rep. Henry A. Waxman, together with Reps. Bobby L. Rush, Christopher P. Carney, and Keith Ellison, today introduced the Lead Free Toys Act to ban lead from toys, toy jewelry, and other products used by children under age six. Sen. Barack Obama introduced the companion bill in the Senate today.

“Lead in children’s products is dangerous and unnecessary,” said Rep. Henry A. Waxman, Chairman of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee. “For nearly three years I have called for strong action to get the lead out of these products. I hope now the time has arrived. This is the kind of simple, commonsense action that the Consumer Product Safety Commission should have taken years ago.”

“The provisions called for in this bill are long overdue given more than 30 years of documented evidence of the damage that can be done to children, especially those in low-income communities, from exposure to this neuro-toxin,” said Rep. Bobby Rush, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection of the Committee on Energy and Commerce. “Following recent hearings on this issue in our subcommittee, I believe that a full ban on lead in children’s toys and jewelry is the only way to prevent this poison from harming children and families.”

“As a father of five, I am concerned about our children’s safety. Children’s toys on U.S. store shelves should not contain unknown hazards that can cause such potentially devastating harm,” said Rep. Christopher P. Carney. “This legislation is a good first step to keeping hazardous substances out of our children’s toys. I look forward to working with Congressman Waxman to ensure the safety of toys across the nation. As the holidays approach, this legislation is even more urgent.”

“I am honored to stand with Congressman Waxman in introducing this important legislation to ban lead in children’s toy products,” said Rep. Keith Ellison. “This is personal for me. Last year, one of my constituents, a four year old toddler named Jarnell Brown died because he swallowed a charm on a bracelet that contained dangerous amounts of lead. Were this legislation the law of the land, perhaps Jarnell would be celebrating a fifth birthday this year. This bill,

when enacted, will prevent future tragedies for Jarnell Brown, his parents and countless other American families.”

“Lead-contaminated toys have endangered the lives of millions of our country’s children,” said Sen. Obama. “The health of our children is a top priority, and we must take every step required to protect them from these dangerous products. The extraordinary scale of this challenge demands meaningful and innovative solutions to prevent lead-contaminated toys from harming our children. This legislation will help restore the confidence of the American people that the products they are using are thoroughly inspected and safe, and I thank Chairman Waxman for his leadership on this issue.”

High doses of lead can cause seizures and even death, while low doses can cause impaired learning and behavioral problems. Recent recalls of popular children’s toys have brought attention to the problem of lead in such products, but this issue is not new. In late 2004, nearly 150 million pieces of toy jewelry were recalled for toxic levels of lead. In 2005 and 2006 millions more pieces of tainted jewelry were recalled, and in March 2006, a young child died after ingesting a Reebok charm that contained over 99% lead.

In January 2005, citing the initial wave of toy jewelry recalls, Rep. Waxman called on the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to take decisive action to protect children. When CPSC refused to set a strong, enforceable standard, Reps. Waxman, Rush, and others introduced the Lead Free Toys Act, a bill directing CPSC to ban anything above trace levels of lead in children’s products. Now, over two years later, new recalls have exposed the presence of lead in many more children’s products, and CPSC still has failed to address this hazard. Today’s legislation imposes a statutory limit on lead in children’s products, rather than directing CPSC to impose such a ban.

Under the bill as reintroduced, any product marketed for use by children under age six or whose substantial use by children under age six is foreseeable may contain no more than the following levels of lead:

- 600 parts per million (ppm), effective within 30 days of enactment
- 250 ppm, effective one year after enactment
- 100 ppm, effective two years after enactment

This step-wise approach will impose immediate changes to protect children while giving manufacturers additional time to develop controls to ensure that all children’s products are free of lead.

The text of the bill is available online at www.oversight.house.gov.