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SCHAKOWSKY, CONSUMER ADVOCATES, ISSUE WARNING TO PARENTS ABOUT DANGEROUS TOYS

OFFER TIPS FOR SAFE HOLIDAY SHOPPING

CHICAGO, IL - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), the top Democratic on the Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection Subcommittee, today joined the Illinois Public Interest Research Group (PIRG), consumer advocates and parents for a press conference to release "Trouble in Toyland", PIRG's report on unsafe toys. The report should help parents and other shoppers avoid buying toys known to pose hazards to children this holiday season.

"We need a real commitment to child product safety in this country and a new culture at the CPSC," said Schakowsky. "The Commission should no longer wait for tragedy to strike before taking action to address unsafe children's products, because Parents have a right to assume that the items sold on toy store shelves this holiday season are safe for their children."

Schakowsky's full statement, as prepared for delivery, follows:

"Thank you, Illinois PIRG and Brian Imus for releasing the 21st annual "Trouble in Toyland" report; Nancy Cowles from Kids in Danger for your years of service to consumer and child product safety; Lisa Lipin for your tireless efforts to raise awareness and protect children from a toy that has harmed hundreds of children, the yo-yo ball. I am proud to join all of you.

"Black Friday - the biggest shopping day of the year - is just a few short days away. Next Monday is the busiest online shopping day of the year. When families and friends hit the shopping aisles for the children in their lives, they are looking for gifts that educate and entertain, not ones that take them for a ride...straight to the emergency

room.

"But here we are again to issue our annual warning. Another year has passed. Thousands of children have been rushed to the emergency room because of injuries they sustained playing with unsafe toys. Tragically, some of them died. Our country lost 20 children in 2005 alone.

"Most people think that if a product is on the shelf, then it must be safe. They believe the government is looking out for them and their children. In fact, a Coalition for Consumer Rights survey in Illinois found that 75-percent of adults believe that the government oversees pre-market testing for children's products; 79-percent believe that manufacturers are required to test the safety of those products before they are sold.

"For most products, neither is true. In fact, there are no mandatory safety standards for the majority of the children's products being sold today. Congress passed legislation in 1981 that prohibits the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) from establishing mandatory standards in most cases. The bulk of the standards that are in place are 'voluntarily' set by the very industries looking to make profits - and they are also expected to police themselves. There are no requirements that the industry-set standards address all potential hazards, no requirement that products be tested in the field or tested to ensure the standards are met before being sold, and no consequences for the manufacturer if the standards are not met.

"This is true even for baby carriers, cradles, high chairs, and other items bought specifically for infants and children. Although the CPSC requires no testing, do not be mistaken, children's products are tested. They are tested in our own homes, with our children and grandchildren as test dummies. The cost of those tests can be a panicked child, bruised fingers, a near-strangulation, fractured skulls, or a dead child.

"Unintended injuries are the leading cause of death for children under the age of four. As a leading expert on child product safety, Marla Felcher's research reveals, many of these deaths are because of unsafe products. And, as the title of her book says, "It's No Accident."

"However, families who turn to this report during this holiday season will be armed with a critical tool as they shop for toys for their loved-ones. Thanks to PIRG's previous 20 reports, more than [120] corrective actions have been taken by the CPSC and toy manufacturers. These annual reports save lives.

"It is a great service, and we are fortunate to have a watchdog group like PIRG help to force the government to protect our children. Unfortunately, the CPSC protects corporations more than consumers. The CPSC approaches product safety with caution and delay - wait for a disaster before warning consumers.

"The yo-yo ball, which has been brought to our attention by my constituent - Lisa Lipin - and featured in this year's report, underscores the culture of the CPSC. Yo-yo balls are dangerous toys that remain on the market across most of the United States, even though the government has indisputable evidence that they should be banned. Here are the facts:

- ***the CPSC has received over 409 injury reports, including some where kids were almost strangled to death;***
- ***yo-yo balls have been banned in some European countries;***
- ***the state of Illinois have banned them;***
- ***major retailers have agreed to stop selling them; and***
- ***former CPSC Chairman Stratton has taken the toy away from children in his own family.***

"Although the CPSC has reopened its 2003 investigation into the yo-yo ball, it is time for action - not just further study. The agency that is charged with protecting consumers should issue an immediate ban of this potentially deadly toy. Just last week I renewed my call for the CPSC to institute a national ban on yo-yo balls. I have not heard back from the Commission, but I will work with all of you to keep the pressure on.

"It's time to declare our rights as consumers to be protected from hazardous and harmful products. As the top Democrat on the Consumer Protection Subcommittee for the past four years, I pushed for hearings and legislation on unsafe products and for stronger safety standards for children's products. We need a change in the culture at the CPSC because products will not be as safe as they should be until the CPSC becomes an agency with the authority, funding, and mandate to put the interests of consumers ahead of corporate profits. That is one of my top priorities and I will continue to work with my

colleagues and consumers groups to recall the bad laws that prevent the CPSC from putting safety first.

"This holiday season, parents have a tool, PIRG's "Trouble in Toyland," to help protect their children.□ But the most significant present we can give all consumers the next holiday season is the guarantee that the products they buy are safe and secure."