

CFA PAC Endorses Congressional Candidates

In September, Consumer Federation of America's campaign committee issued endorsements of 137 candidates in the 1990 congressional elections. In the House of Representatives, CFA endorsed 109 incumbents and 19 challengers. In the Senate, CFA endorsed seven incumbents and two challengers.

Incumbent candidates were evaluated on the basis of their career voting records on key consumer issues.

Challengers were chosen from races against incumbents with poor consumer voting records and races for open seats. They were judged on the basis of their positions on important pending consumer issues.

"Voters who attempt to make informed decisions about the candidates they elect have learned to examine their voting records and their stated positions on key issues of concern to them," said CFA Legislative Representative Peggy Miller.

"These endorsements indicate which candidates consumers can trust to defend their need for a safer, sounder financial system, more corporate responsibility, better housing, safer products, a cleaner environment and more equitable tax laws," she said.

Endorsed incumbents are those whose voting records show them to be:

- consumer protectors in the battles to control irresponsible corporate profiteering, concentration and management;
- champions of financial protection through increased regulations and tougher standards over financial agencies and institutions;
- advocates of a cleaner, safer environment through more sensible industrial practices and stronger regulatory enforcement; and
- defenders of decent, affordable housing for all consumers.

Challengers were selected for endorsement on the basis of their strong commitment to a variety of important consumer issues, including:

- a safer, sounder financial system;
- control of insurance industry collusion, which results in high prices to consumers, through application of antitrust laws to this industry;
- stronger watchdog legislation and funding for the Consumer Product Safety Commission to enable that agency to better control unsafe product development and sales; and
- a health care system that provides greater access to decent care for the 37 million Americans who are currently uninsured.

"The next Congress will determine policy on issues of vital concern to consumers, including the structure of our entire financial system and how this country will approach the information age,"



Miller said. "The continued presence of pro-consumer incumbents is essential to ensure that consumer interests are defended and consumer protections are strengthened.

"In addition, we need to see consumer support strengthened by the addition of new pro-consumer representatives and senators from the ranks of these endorsed challengers," she said. "Only then can we build on the successes of the recent past to protect the health, safety, and pocket-books of the American public."

SENATE

DE: Sen. Joseph R. Biden (D)
IA: Sen. Tom Harkin (D)
IL: Sen. Paul Simon (D)

KY: Harvey Slone (D)
MA: Sen. John F. Kerry (D)
MI: Sen. Carl Levin (D)

NC: Harvey Gantt (D)
RI: Sen. Claiborne Pell (D)
WV: Sen. John D. Rockefeller (D)

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AL: Faye Baggiano (D-2nd)
AZ: Mark Ivey (D-4th)
CA: Rep. Robert T. Matsui (D-3rd)
Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-5th)
Rep. Barbara Boxer (D-6th)
Rep. George Miller (D-7th)
Rep. Ronald V. Dellums (D-8th)
Rep. Fortney H. Stark (D-9th)
Rep. Don Edwards (D-10th)
Rep. Tom Lantos (D-11th)
Rep. Leon E. Panetta (D-16th)
David Bayer (D-22nd)
Rep. Anthony C. Beilenson (D-23rd)
Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D-24th)
Rep. Edward R. Roybal (D-25th)
Rep. Howard L. Berman (D-26th)
Rep. Mel Levine (D-27th)
Rep. Matthew G. Martinez (D-30th)
Gloria Webb (D-33rd)
Rep. Esteban E. Torres (D-34th)
Rep. George E. Brown (D-36th)
Rep. Jim Bates (D-44th)
CO: Rep. Patricia Schroeder (D-1st)
CT: Rep. Barbara B. Kennelly (D-1st)
Rep. Sam Gejdenson (D-2nd)
Rosa DeLauro (D-3rd)
Rep. Christopher Shays (R-4th)
Toby Moffett (D-5th)
FL: James Bacchus (D-11th)
Rep. Harry A. Johnston (D-14th)
GA: Rep. John Lewis (D-5th)
IL: Rep. Charles A. Hayes (D-1st)
Rep. George E. Sangmeister (D-4th)
Rep. Sidney R. Yates (D-9th)
John Cox (D-16th)
Rep. Lane Evans (D-17th)
Rep. Richard J. Durbin (D-20th)
Rep. Jerry Costello (D-21st)
Rep. Glenn Poshard (D-22nd)
IN: Rep. Peter J. Visclosky (D-1st)
Tim Roemer (D-3rd)
Rep. Jill Long (D-4th)
Rep. James Jontz (D-5th)

James Fadely (D-6th)
Rep. Frank McCloskey (D-8th)
MA: Rep. Silvio O. Conte (R-1st)
Rep. Barney Frank (D-4th)
Rep. Chester G. Atkins (D-5th)
Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-7th)
Rep. Joseph P. Kennedy (D-8th)
Rep. Joe Moakley (D-9th)
Rep. Gerry E. Studds (D-10th)
Rep. Brian J. Donnelly (D-11th)
MD: Rep. Benjamin L. Cardin (D-3rd)
Rep. Steny H. Hoyer (D-5th)
Rep. Kweisi Mfume (D-7th)
Rep. Constance A. Morella (R-8th)
ME: Tom Andrews (D-1st)
MI: Rep. Howard Wolpe (D-3rd)
Rep. Dale E. Kildee (D-7th)
Rep. David E. Bonior (D-12th)
Rep. Dennis M. Hertel (D-14th)
Rep. William D. Ford (D-15th)
Rep. Sander M. Levin (D-17)
MN: Rep. Bruce F. Vento (D-4th)
Rep. Martin Olav Sabo (D-5th)
Rep. Gerry Sikorski (D-6th)
Rep. James L. Oberstar (D-8th)
MO: Rep. Alan Wheat (D-5th)
ND: Rep. Bryon Dorgan (D-AL)
NE: Rep. Peter Hoagland (D-2nd)
NH: Joseph Keefe (D-1st)
NJ: Rep. Frank Pallone (D-3rd)
Rep. Bernard J. Dwyer (D-6th)
Rep. Matthew J. Rinaldo (R-7th)
Rep. Robert G. Torricelli (D-9th)
Rep. Donald M. Payne (D-10th)
Marguerite Chandler (D-12th)
Rep. Frank J. Guarini (D-14th)
NY: Rep. George Hochbrueckner (D-1st)
Rep. Thomas J. Downey (D-2nd)
Rep. Robert J. Mrazek (D-3rd)
Rep. Floyd H. Flake (D-6th)
Rep. Gary L. Ackerman (D-7th)
Rep. James H. Scheuer (D-8th)
Rep. Charles E. Schumer (D-10th)

Rep. Major R. Owens (D-12th)
Rep. Stephen J. Solarz (D-13th)
Rep. Charles B. Rangel (D-16th)
Rep. Ted Weiss (D-17th)
Rep. Eliot L. Engel (D-19th)
Rep. Nita M. Lowey (D-20th)
Rep. Michael R. McNulty (D-23rd)
Rep. Matthew F. McHugh (D-28th)
Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-30th)
Rep. John J. LaFalce (D-32nd)
Rep. Henry J. Nowak (D-33rd)
OH: Jack Schira (D-7th)
Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-9th)
Rep. Dennis E. Eckart (D-11th)
Rep. Thomas C. Sawyer (D-14th)
Rep. James Traficant, Jr. (D-17th)
Rep. Edward F. Feighan (D-19th)
Rep. Mary Rose Oakar (D-20th)
Rep. Louis Stokes (D-21st)
OR: Jim Smiley (D-2nd)
Rep. Ron Wyden (D-3rd)
Rep. Peter A. DeFazio (D-4th)
Mike Kopetski (D-5th)
PA: Rep. Thomas M. Foglietta (D-1st)
Rep. William H. Gray, III (D-2nd)
Rep. Robert A. Borski (D-3rd)
Rep. Peter H. Kostmayer (D-8th)
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RI: Jack Reed (D-2nd)
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WA: Rep. Jolene Unsoeld (D-3rd)
Rep. Jim McDermott (D-7th)
WI: Rep. Robert Kastenmeier (D-2nd)
Rep. Gerald D. Kleczka (D-4th)
Rep. Jim Moody (D-5th)
Rep. David R. Obey (D-7th)
WV: Rep. Harley O. Staggers, Jr. (D-2nd)

Products Implicated In 600,000 Deaths A Year

Consumer products are implicated in the deaths of more than 600,000 Americans each year and the injury and illness of tens of millions of others, according to a report released in July by the Coalition for Consumer Health and Safety.

"The Nation's Health and Safety: A Status Report" finds both encouraging and discouraging trends in product-related health and safety.


It reports, for example, that both motor vehicle and household product deaths, and related costs, are on the rise. On the other hand, it finds a sharp drop in smoking and a slight decline in drinking. Still, smoking and drinking account for the large majority of all product-related deaths.


"The successes in product-related health and safety demonstrate the importance of a coordinated effort by government, consumer, health, and business groups," said CFA Executive Director Stephen Brobeck, who serves as chairman of the coalition. "Federal agencies must take a leadership role in promoting consumer health and safety."

The 36-page statistical source book brings together information on mortality and morbidity, economic costs, the causes of health and safety threats, and related federal expenditures associated with seven subject areas: motor vehicle safety, home and product safety, indoor air quality, food safety and nutrition, cigarette consumption, alcohol consumption, and AIDS.

It is the first annual publication of its kind by the coalition of 37 consumer, public health, and insurer groups.

The following are among the major findings of the report:


 Deaths and economic costs from motor vehicle accidents continue to rise, with more than 47,000 Americans killed in 1988 at a cost of \$89 billion. More than 15 percent of all motor vehicle fatalities are passengers in light trucks or vans, and this number is increasing.

 Between 1987 and 1988, deaths from accidents in the home, disabling injuries, and associated economic costs all rose — deaths from 21,500 to 22,500, injuries from 3.1 to 3.4 million, and costs from \$16.7 to \$17.4 billion. During the same period, the budget of the U.S. Con-





Experts presented key findings at a July news conference. From left to right: Sally Clary, the Alliance of American Insurers; Patricia Taylor, Center for Science in the Public Interest; M. Arnita Hannon, American Lung Association; Stephen Brobeck, CFA; Mary Ellen Fise, CFA; Ellen Haas, Public Voice for Food and Health Policy; and Jude Payne, Health Insurance Association of America.

sumer Product Safety Commission — the federal agency designated to address these hazards — decreased by nearly 5 percent. Although the budget did increase slightly between 1988 and 1990, it remains 50 percent lower in inflation adjusted dollars than the 1974 budget for this agency.

 Recognition of the hazards posed by indoor air pollution is relatively recent, and few statistics are available. However, recent studies, particularly related to secondary tobacco smoke and radon, clearly indicate that indoor air pollution is a serious health problem. In recognition of that fact, the Environmental Protection Agency has substantially increased its funding of indoor air activities to about \$30 million. Spending


by the CPSC, on the other hand, remains low.

 The number of deaths attributable to smoking rose dramatically between 1975 and 1985, reaching an estimated 390,000 in 1985 and making smoking the single greatest cause of premature death and disease in our society. Between 1965 and 1987, however, the proportion of adults who smoked declined significantly — men by 40 percent and women by 21 percent.


 A large percentage of Americans consume too little fiber and too much cholesterol, sodium, and dietary fat — especially saturated fat. This overconsumption is a key contributing factor to the nation's high rate of cardiovascular

disease, which kills nearly a million Americans a year.

• The nation's food safety monitoring and testing system suffers from serious inadequacies. For example, Food and Drug Administration testing methods can detect only 41 percent of 73 pesticides that have been shown to cause cancer in laboratory animals but have nonetheless been approved for use by the Environmental Protection Agency.

 Between 1985 and 1987, the estimated number of deaths attributable to alcohol consumption rose from 89,415 to 90,991. Consumption imposes tremendous costs on society, \$130 billion last year alone. On the other hand, per capita alcohol consumption is at its lowest level since 1970, and the percentage of "occasional heavy drinkers" among high school seniors was down to 35 percent in 1988, having reached a high of 41 percent in 1979 and 1980.

• Federal spending on programs to combat alcohol-related problems nearly doubled between fiscal year 1988 and 1990.

 Although the rate of increase in newly reported AIDS cases declined slightly during the past year, the number of new cases reported increased in every demographic category. Although homosexual and bisexual contact remains the most common vehicle for transmission of the AIDS virus, as the disease enters its second decade, it is spreading faster among IV drug users and their sexual partners. Blacks and hispanics are disproportionately represented in all exposure categories.

Copies of the report are available for \$10 from Consumer Federation of America, 1424 16th Street, N.W., Suite 604, Washington, D.C. 20036, (202) 387-6121.

CFA, NICO Urge Auto Insurance Price Freeze

With the Persian Gulf crisis causing a dramatic increase in the price of oil, the Consumer Federation of America and the National Insurance Consumer Organization (NICO) have called for a national 30-day moratorium on auto insurance rate hikes "until the impact of oil price increases on driving and related insurer costs are adequately assessed."

"The Middle East crisis has caused great uncertainty about the near-term availability and cost of gasoline," CFA Executive Director Stephen Brobeck and NICO President J. Robert Hunter wrote in a September letter to each state insurance commissioner. "What we already know is that within the past month, pump prices have risen an average of 20 percent and crude oil prices more than 50 percent."

As Prices Rise, Accidents Fall

Citing research on the relationship of gasoline prices to driving and insurer losses, the two called on all insurance commissioners to implement a 30-day price freeze on auto insurance rates, giving the commissioners an opportunity to assess the magnitude of reductions

in insurer costs and the need for rate reductions.

"As gasoline prices rise, Americans drive less and that means fewer claims," said Hunter, a former Federal Insurance Administrator. "State regulators must act now to protect us from overcharges. Absent such action, auto insurance companies could make windfall profits."

Studies have shown that there is a strong negative correlation between gas prices and miles driven. According to a study by Resources for the Future, the correlation ranges from -.10 to -.50.

Assuming a -.25 correlation, if pump prices rise 25 percent, then miles driven should fall by nearly six percent. If prices increase by 50 percent, a distinct possibility, driving can be expected to decline by more than ten percent.

Since a decline in miles driven means fewer accidents — studies show that the correlation of miles driven to accident frequency is over +.9 — the two groups predict that "insurer claims will be 4.5 percent lower than their normal trend projections would predict if today's 20 percent higher prices hold."

If prices rise 25 percent and driving declines nearly six percent, insurer losses

would likely be reduced by nearly that amount, said CFA Research Director Mark Cooper. "Further, if rising oil prices trigger a recession, as many experts are predicting, people can be expected to drive even less."

Depression Would Trigger Further Claim Decrease

The correlation of real disposable income to miles driven is even stronger than the correlation of gas prices to miles driven. Studies indicate that this correlation is +.9.

"So, if inflation and unemployment depress purchasing power, driving will drop even more steeply than from the gas price effects alone," he said.

"Given all of these dynamic changes, the potential of windfall profits for auto insurers as a result of these events is real," Hunter warned.

A 30-day moratorium would allow time for clarification of the Middle East situation and the extent of gasoline hikes, as well as for an assessment of the impact of these hikes on driving and related auto insurer costs, he said.

CFAnews 

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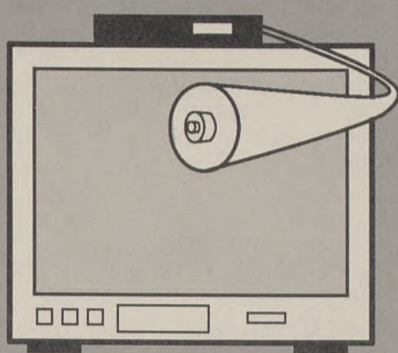
House Votes To Reregulate Cable

Just after returning from its August recess, the House passed on voice vote a bill to protect consumers from unreasonable cable television rates and open the door to increased competition.

"This is one of the bigger victories for consumers this year, because it combines immediate pocketbook protections with the promotion of competition to cable over the longterm," said CFA Legislative Director Gene Kimmelman.

In the Senate, a similar bill cleared by the Commerce Committee in June is expected to face stiffer opposition when it comes to the floor, in part because of its stronger limits on vertical integration and exclusive ownership of programming.

The Bush Administration has threatened to veto the reregulation legislation if it wins final approval in Congress. The administration prefers lifting restrictions on telephone company entry into the cable business, an approach opposed by consumer groups and rejected earlier this



year by Congress.

"Since most telephone wires are not capable of transmitting video signals, and it could cost telephone ratepayers an estimated \$250 billion in rate increases to finance a phone company video network by the turn of the century, we believe it is against consumers' interests to promote phone company video service at this time," Kimmelman said.

"Reregulation should yield all the same benefits that phone companies talk about without the additional ratepayer cost or risk," he said.

Despite the remaining obstacles, the overwhelming bipartisan support for the measure in the House offers real hope for passage this session, with or without a presidential veto.

"With the legislative session drawing to a close, the real problem now is time," Kimmelman said.

Under the bill passed by the House, the Federal Communications Commission would set a maximum fee cable operators could charge for a basic tier of services consisting of the networks, an independent and a PBS station.

The bill also contains protections against unreasonable rates for the most popular package of cable services, as well as regulatory standards and pricing restrictions for equipment and services essential to receive cable programming. It also

establishes federal and local authority over cable customer service.

In order to remove cable's unfair competitive advantage, the bill requires full access to cable programming for satellite dish users at a reasonable price and greater access to cable programming for potential competitors, such as wireless cable and K-band direct broadcast satellite.

In addition, the bill directs the FCC to prohibit vertically integrated cable companies from favoring their affiliates or discriminating against potential competitors through inappropriate contractual arrangements, and it requires cable operators to lease channels to third parties at fair and reasonable prices, terms and conditions.

"Even though this legislation does not address all major consumer concerns about the video marketplace, it is a clear improvement over the 1984 Cable Act and today's unregulated monopoly environment," Kimmelman said.

Bill Attacks Financial Planning Abuses

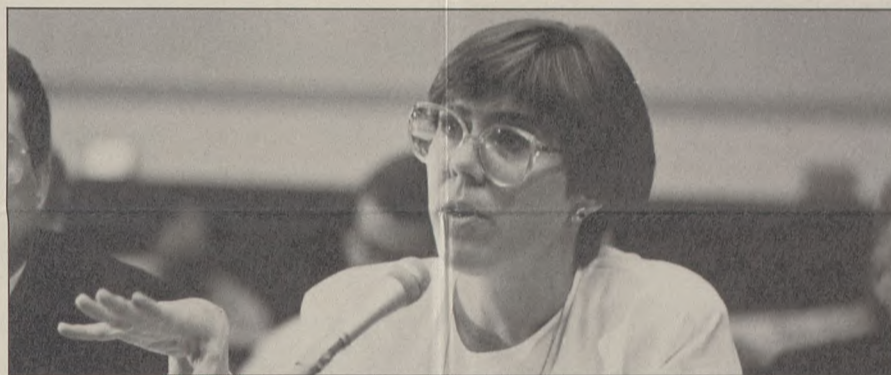
In a July hearing before the House Telecommunications and Finance Subcommittee, CFA Legislative Representative Barbara Roper praised a bill to provide uniform regulation of financial planners as "a much needed and effective measure to address widespread fraud and abuse in this industry."

In its 1987 study of financial planning abuses, CFA estimated that consumers were losing more than half a billion dollars a year to financial planning fraud. In addition, the study found that consumers misinvested or lost another half a billion dollars as a result of self-interested or incompetent planning.

In March, Rep. Rick Boucher (D-VA) introduced H.R. 4441, the "Investment Advisers Disclosure and Enforcement Act of 1990," to address these problems.

The bill would amend the Investment Advisers Act to cover all those who hold themselves out to the public as financial planners, whether or not they fit the current investment adviser definition.

"Up until now, we have been regulating financial planners under a patchwork of laws that cover the various functions financial planners perform," Roper said. "The result has been a chaotic system in which



CFA Legislative Representative Barbara Roper called for uniform regulation of financial planners at a July House subcommittee hearing.

the average consumer has no way of knowing exactly what standards his adviser is required to meet.

"There has been another even more serious result," Roper added. "Con artists have been able to thrive in the cracks in the regulatory system, confident that they can call themselves financial planners and trigger little if any regulatory scrutiny."

By holding all planners to the same standards and by subjecting them to Securities and Exchange Commission oversight, H.R.

4441 would help plug the holes in this regulatory system, Roper said.

H.R. 4441 also would strengthen the act's disclosure requirements to include far more detailed information about how advisers are compensated, including actual dollar amounts of commissions and other sales inducements they receive from the products they recommend. "This provision is key to attacking self-interested planning, since it gives individuals the information they need to judge for themselves how objective their financial plan-

ner is," Roper said.

In order to beef up enforcement of the act, the bill provides for civil penalties for violations of the act and creates a private right of action under the act, enabling those investors who can prove financial harm as a result of their adviser's violation of the act's fraud provisions to sue for damages.

"With these provisions, the bill would help to create an incentive for compliance with the act that up until now has been sorely lacking," she said. "The private rights of action provision is particularly important in this regard, since it creates an incentive for compliance without placing any additional strain on limited SEC resources."

Roper noted that adequate SEC funding is also essential for prevention and detection of abuses, an issue that is not addressed in this legislation. Regardless of the funding issue, however, the Boucher bill would improve dramatically the current regulatory system, she said.

"This legislation moves the Investment Adviser Act out of the Dark Ages and into line with the conditions that actually exist in the world today," she said.

House Passes Food Labeling Bill

Before leaving for the August recess, the House passed legislation to establish national standards for nutrition labeling and health claim requirements related to food.

Currently, food labels must provide nutrition information only when a nutrition claim, such as "low calorie," is also made on the label. Often, the information is provided in a format that consumers find difficult, if not impossible, to decipher.

H.R. 3562 would require that labels on all but a few exempted items:

- list the number of servings per container based on "an amount customarily consumed;"
- provide information on calorie con-

tent, including total number of calories derived from any source, derived from total fat, and derived from saturated fat; and

- list the amount of total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, total carbohydrates, complex carbohydrates, sugars, dietary fiber, and total protein.

"This kind of labeling overhaul is long overdue," said CFA Product Safety Coordinator Edith Furst. "Consumers have made it clear that this is the type of information they want and need to make intelligent choices about their food consumption."

For the 20 most frequently consumed types of vegetables, fruits, and raw fish,

the bill would require vendors to supply nutrition information, either by posting signs or by supplying brochures.

Furthermore, health claims for foods would only be permitted if the Food and Drug Administration determines in regulations that they are valid, based on "significant scientific agreement."

The FDA is directed to develop such health claim regulations, as well as definitions for such commonly used content claims as "light" or "low salt," within 18 months of enactment.

One of the biggest controversies surrounding the bill deals with the issue of pre-emption of state laws. A compromise provision was included in the bill

passed by the House. It prohibits state and local governments from establishing conflicting labeling requirements related to nutrition, but it does not pre-empt state or local authority to require warnings about carcinogens or other substances contained in foods.

Consumer advocates are concerned that the compromise language may still result in too broad a pre-emption of state authority, covering labeling issues not germane to the content of the House bill.

The pre-emption issue is also holding up passage of a similar Senate bill, S. 1425, approved by the Labor and Human Resources Committee in April.

Groups Petition CPSC on ATV Safety

CFA and the U.S. Public Interest Research Group filed a petition with the Consumer Product Safety Commission in July calling on that agency to take further action to reduce the toll of deaths and injuries caused by All Terrain Vehicles.

ATV crashes have killed more than 1,500 people and seriously injured more than 450,000 others since 1982. Forty percent of the victims are children under age 16. According to the CPSC's own estimates, approximately 300 people died in each of the four years from 1985 through 1988.

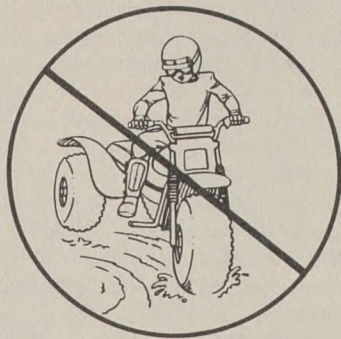
"Too little, too late is an apt description of CPSC's response to the mounting ATV deaths and injuries," said CFA Product Safety Director Mary Ellen Fise. "It has become clear that CPSC needs to get tougher on this issue."

Under the provisions of the consent decree negotiated with the ATV industry in 1988, sale of three-wheel ATVs was banned, but the sale of four-wheel ATVs was not banned. The decree also banned sale of adult-size ATVs for use by children under age 12, and manufacturers agreed to provide training in safe use for ATV purchasers and to display warnings of ATV hazards.

"The consent decree has not adequately reduced the risk to consumers," Fise explained.

In order to reduce those risks, the CFA-U.S. PIRG petition calls on the CPSC to:

1) Establish a mandatory standard on lateral stability, to address



the most dangerous aspect of the vehicles, their poor resistance to sideways rollover. As part of the 1988 consent decree, the CPSC and the five defendant manufacturers had agreed to attempt in good faith to reach agreement on voluntary standards.

"In May 1990 the industry concluded it was unable to agree on a lateral stability standard," Fise said. "Meanwhile, four-wheel ATVs continue to flip over and kill or injure their riders. The time for waiting and hoping for a negotiated solution has run out."

2) Ban ATV use by children. "Experts agree that children simply do not have the developmental skills and maturity needed to operate any ATV safely," Fise said. "Limiting the use of ATVs to adults will prevent thousands of needless childhood deaths and injuries."

3) Ban three-wheel ATVs. The 1988 consent decree halted for ten years the sale of new three-wheel ATVs by the five

major ATV manufacturers. "Given the commission's finding that these vehicles are inherently unstable and unreasonably dangerous, a permanent ban on three-wheelers is necessary to ensure that these machines are not sold by manufacturers not subject to the consent decree, are not commercially resold, or reintroduced in the future," Fise said.

4) Promulgate a rule which would provide refunds to consumers who purchased any three-wheel ATV and any four-wheel ATV that was purchased for use by a child. "CFA believes that such refunds would send a clear message that the government considers these vehicles unsafe and therefore would serve as an effective incentive for removing many of

these extremely dangerous products from use," Fise said.

A nationwide U.S. PIRG survey of ATV dealers found that, in direct violation of the age restrictions established in the consent decree, 54 percent of the ATV dealers surveyed were willing to sell an ATV for use by a ten-year-old.

"Our survey and a separate CPSC survey both found that ATV dealers are willing to sell adult-size ATVs to children," said Lucinda Sikes, a staff attorney with U.S. PIRG. "Given the more than 100 childhood deaths annually and the industry's substantial disregard for the consent decree's provisions addressing children, a ban of ATVs for children's use is justified and necessary."

CPSC Approves Crib Toy Petition

The Consumer Product Safety Commission voted 2-1 in August to approve a petition filed by CFA and the Attorney General of New York and begin rule-making to ban certain types of crib toys.

The petition, which was filed in November 1988, calls for a ban on crib toys that have been implicated in at least 30 deaths, one severe brain damage, and 18 near misses between 1973 and 1987. These include popular crib gyms and crib mobiles.

The petition was based on a 1987 study by CPSC staff which found that the toy voluntary standard does not adequately address crib toy hazards and that performance requirements to address this risk are technically feasible.

Favorable votes on the petition came from Commissioner Anne Graham and Chairman Jacqueline Jones-Smith.

"This rulemaking addresses a critical gap in toy safety requirements and will protect the most vulnerable toy users, infants under one year of age," said CFA Product Safety Director Mary Ellen Fise.

Farm Bill Contains Sustainable Ag Provisions

Proponents of a more environmentally sound agriculture policy moved one step closer to their goal this summer when both houses of Congress passed versions of the omnibus farm bill that begin to redirect the system away from heavy reliance on pesticides and other chemicals and toward a more "sustainable" approach that conserves water supply and quality, promotes food safety, and protects the natural resource base.

The two bills, which have gone to conference committee to iron out differences, both contain provisions to redirect agricultural research and development, as well as extension programs, to support the use of sustainable agriculture techniques. Details of the provisions differ, with the Senate bill containing a stronger definition of sustainable agriculture, while the House bill contains higher authorization levels for these programs.

Amendments that would have kept non-profit groups from participating in the research program were defeated on the floor.

Both bills also include measures that increase the flexibility in price support programs to allow farmers to maintain their base allotment when they plant resource-conserving crops. The House bill is stronger than the Senate version, allowing farmers to market the resource-conserving crops (including water-conserving crops) while they continue to have their acreage included under the price support programs. If the crop they switch to is part of the price support system, the farmer would be eligible to receive that payment.

Because both houses passed a version of these measures, programs of this type are assured of surviving in conference in some form.

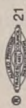
"We won't know until the bill comes out of conference committee just what the final legislation will look like, but we are pushing to get the best possible package we can," said CFA Legislative Representative Peggy Miller.

Both bills also contained provisions to set a national standard for use of the term organic on food labels and to establish a U.S. Department of Agriculture organic labeling and certification program. This should make it easier for farmers to market organically grown foods across state lines and through supermarket chains.

Provisions were also included to require farmers to keep records of their use of pesticides or other chemicals that have been found to be toxic.

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