

From toys tainted with lead paint, to collapsing cribs, to dangerous food products sold in grocery stores, in recent weeks many major companies have been forced to recall dangerous products from the consumer market.

The recent surge in recalls reminds us why it is important to have a process in place that safeguards consumers. Citizens need to be confident that the products they are buying are not going to endanger the lives of them or their children. As a grandparent, I too am concerned and believe that more needs to be done to keep our children safe from unsafe products.

One of the top priorities of the new Congress is to better protect America's children – including ensuring that the products that our children use are completely safe and reliable. Last week, the House of Representatives unanimously approved four bills to help achieve this goal.

Under one measure, highchairs, cribs and other durable infant products would be sold with a postage-paid registration card so consumers would be informed quickly of recalls. This legislation, the Danny Keysar Child Product Safety Notification Act, was named after Danny Keysar, a 16-month-old boy, who died in 1998 when he took a nap in a portable crib that collapsed, strangling him.

The crib model had been recalled five years earlier for the very defect that led to the collapse, but Danny's parents and his caregiver were unaware of the recall. Clearly, the current recall system, which relies heavily on the media alone is not effective in getting the word out to parents about defective products for young children.

To improve the incentive for companies to report safety problems with their products, we also passed the Product Safety Civil Penalties Improvement Act. This legislation increases the maximum civil penalty for violations of the Consumer Product Safety Act from \$1.82 million to \$10 million over two years. This

increase in potential fines should prove to be a strong deterrent for any company that might otherwise be inclined to flout the law.

Another bill, the Children's Gasoline Burn Prevention Act, protects children from death or serious injury from burn hazards by requiring child-resistant caps for gasoline containers, whether sold with or without gasoline.

Data from the Consumer Product Safety Commission estimate that, in a single year, more than 1,200 children under the age of five were treated in emergency rooms for injuries related to gasoline, either through fire, ingestion, or inhalation of fumes.

Finally, we passed a measure to protect children from drowning by requiring industry standards on swimming pool and spa drain covers to prevent children from being entrapped by powerful suction outlets. The Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act also creates a swimming pool safety grant program to encourage states to adopt comprehensive safety laws. Drowning is the second highest cause of accidental deaths among American children, ranking right behind automobile accidents.

In 2003, drowning incidents caused

761 childhood deaths; in 2004, over 3,000 children were treated in emergency rooms for near-drowning, often resulting in permanent injury.

Approximately 40 percent of childhood drowning deaths take place in pools and spas.

These four bills are only the beginning of a broader effort to enact key

legislation that ensures the safety of our children. Additionally, later this fall, the House will consider a comprehensive bill to provide greater resources for the understaffed Consumer Product Safety Commission, ban lead in children's jewelry and products, and make third-party testing of toys and children's products for compliance with safety standards mandatory.

Raising a family is hard work, and parents shouldn't have to worry about purchasing dangerous products at the supermarket or the

mall. The latest recalls on the market only underscore the need to redouble our efforts to ensure products on the market are safe for children and families.