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**Child Safety Advocates and Victims Join Senators Clinton and Sununu and
Representatives Schakowsky and King to Demand Passage of Tougher Laws to Stop
Deaths and Injuries of Children Due to Motor Vehicle Design Flaws
*Victims to Lobby on Eve of Senate Hearing on Child Safety Issues***

Child safety advocates and victims from across America teamed up together in Washington, D.C. today to demand federal safety standards to prevent children from dying in non-traffic automobile incidents such as being backed-over or strangled by power windows.

“Every week at least four children needlessly die in and around cars, said Janette Fennell, president of KIDS AND CARS. “This important child safety legislation will stem the tide of future tragedies. Our children simply cannot wait. We know this is a growing problem, we have the technology to solve it, and now we need legislation to get federal action,” she added.

Since 2000, at least 1,000 children have died in non-traffic incidents, with 219 in 2006 alone. Back-over incidents have increased dramatically claiming the lives of 474 children from 2002-2006 compared to 128 from 1997-2001 and now account for half of all non-traffic fatalities involving children. The federal government does not collect data about non-traffic incidents, so the actual fatality numbers are likely much higher.

A 2002 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that over 9,100 children are treated in hospital emergency rooms due to non-traffic incidents in a one-year time period.

“By taking simple, common sense steps using technology that already exists at low cost, we can make our cars safer for our children and protect them from these deadly, avoidable accidents. We owe it to families to do everything we can to give drivers a warning and give kids a chance,” said Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY).

“Cars don’t need to be moving to be dangerous. Already this year at least 12 children have died as a result of non-traffic automobile accidents,” said Senator John Sununu (R-NH). “Senator Clinton and I have reintroduced our child safety legislation because this issue remains an urgent public safety matter. By taking responsible, affordable precautions – such as installing backover warning systems, power window strangulation prevention mechanisms and brakeshift interlocks – we can save lives.”

The Cameron Gulbransen KIDS AND CARS Safety Act of 2007, sponsored by Senators Clinton and Sununu and Representatives Schakowsky and King, addresses non-traffic safety problems. The bill directs the U.S. Secretary of Transportation to issue regulations to decrease the incidence of child injury and death:

- Ensure power windows automatically reverse direction when they detect an obstruction to prevent children from being trapped, injured or killed;
- Provide drivers with a means of detecting the presence of a person or object behind their vehicle;
- Provide for the vehicle service brake to be engaged to prevent vehicles from unintentionally rolling away; and
- Establish a child safety information program to disseminate information to parents about these hazards and ways to mitigate them; as well begin collecting data about non-traffic incidents.

Seven families of children who were killed in recent non-traffic incidents came to share their stories in the hope that other parents be spared future losses. The victims who traveled to Washington in support of the legislation are: Sue Auriemma, Manhasset, NY; Packy Campbell, Farmington, NH; Britt Gates, Anthony, KS; Angela and Tim Gridley, Cedartown, GA; Christine Isakson, Waterford, VA; Julie and Smith Peck, Marietta, GA; and Arden Rosenfeld, Boca Raton, FL.

“Year after year, hundreds of young lives are needlessly lost because Congress has failed to pass legislation that would make cars safer for children,” said Congresswoman Janice Schakowsky (D-IL), a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee that has jurisdiction over the legislation. “As the grandmother of four, it breaks my heart that so many families have been destroyed by accidents that are entirely preventable. We cannot afford to wait any longer to pass this crucial piece of legislation because thousands of children's lives are at stake.”

“I can’t imagine a more horrible way for a parent to lose a child,” said Representative Peter King (R-NY). “The loss of one child is a terrible tragedy, but the loss of hundreds of children year after year is inexcusable. We have the technology to prevent these unfortunate accidents. At this point, there is no reason that it shouldn’t be a standard feature in all new vehicles.”

A broad coalition of consumer, health, medical and safety groups support passage of the House and Senate legislation including Consumers Union, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, the American Academy of Pediatrics, Public Citizen, Kids in Danger, Trauma Foundation, The Zoie Foundation, Adrianna’s Rule Foundation, Veronica’s Eyes Foundation, Craig’s Crusade and more.

KIDS AND CARS is a national non-profit organization dedicated to reducing injury and death to children in or around motor vehicles.

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