

## **SENATOR CLINTON ANNOUNCES LEGISLATION TO PROTECT CHILDREN IN AND AROUND VEHICLE**

### **Clinton Joins Congressman King, Parents Who Have Lost Children and Child Safety Advocates to Underscore Need to Improve Vehicle Safety**

Garden City, New York – Following testimonials from parents who have lost children in tragic accidents that could be prevented with existing car safety technology, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton today announced that she is introducing bipartisan legislation with Senator John Sununu (R-NH) to improve the child safety features in new vehicles. She was joined by leadership of Consumers Union, who demonstrated the large blind zone behind vehicles that contributes to many of these horrific incidents, and Kids And Cars, an organization dedicated to improving the safety of children in and around parked vehicles. She was also joined by Representative Peter King (R-NY), who has introduced companion legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives.

"These tragedies are heart-wrenching, not only due to the unimaginable suffering these families endure, but also because they are preventable. The technology exists that can save children's lives at relatively low cost and new innovations are being developed all the time. With modest, cost-effective steps, we can prevent scores of terrible automobile accidents from occurring across our nation. That's why I am introducing legislation to make sure child safety technology is implemented in new vehicles. With my bill, we can have safer cars and safer kids across America," said Senator Clinton.

"Even though the technology exists to protect families and children, the technology is not required to be installed. We have an obligation to resolve this as soon as possible. It is common sense," said Representative King. Almost every other day, a young child is killed in a non-traffic automobile accident. These incidents happen to very young children almost always under the age of five because they are impulsive and unpredictable and have little understanding of danger and the concept of personal safety is absent. Since 1999, almost 1000 children have died in non-traffic, non-crash incidents and this number has been steadily rising. According to Kids And Cars, this is already the deadliest year. As of October 15, 2005, there have been 188 fatalities. New York State alone has suffered over 60 non-traffic incidents, 15 of which resulted in fatality. The technology exists to protect families and children from these tragedies, but currently neither Congress nor the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration requires the technology be installed. Such technology is only available on a select few vehicles, or as an after-market product consumers have to purchase themselves. Senator Clinton's bill, the Cameron Gulbransen Kids and Cars Safety Act of 2005, addresses issues surrounding vehicles and child safety, such as children being backed over, strangled by power windows or killed when they or someone else inadvertently knocks a vehicle into motion. The bill directs the U.S. Secretary of Transportation to issue three regulations to decrease the incidence of child injury and death. The first regulation will ensure that power windows automatically reverse direction when they detect an obstruction to prevent children from being trapped, injured or killed. A second will provide drivers with a means of detecting the presence of a person or object behind their vehicle. And a third will provide for the vehicle service brake to be engaged to prevent vehicles from unintentionally rolling away. The bill also establishes a child safety information program administered by the Secretary of Transportation to collect non-traffic, non-crash incident data and disseminate information to parents about these hazards and ways to mitigate them.

"I commend Senator Clinton for introducing this lifesaving bill. Our children are being killed by preventable tragedies in unprecedented numbers," said Janette Fennell, Founder of Kids And Cars. "We have recorded a dramatic spike in the number of children being killed and injured in non-traffic events this year. Congress needs to end these unthinkable deaths. There is absolutely nothing worse than the death of a child, except when you are a parent who learns afterwards technology existed that would have prevented this nightmare from happening. All the parents I know would move Heaven and Earth to prevent the injury or death of their child."

"These tragedies have happened to too many families and will continue to happen at an alarming rate if something isn't done. As a pediatrician and a father who lost a child, I can't tell you how important it is to get these life saving technologies into all vehicles," said Dr. Greg Gulbransen of Long Island.

"How many more kids have to die before something is done? It shocked me when I realized that you rarely leave a car dealership without such standard devices as cruise control and cup-holders; yet devices that will save countless children's lives are not standard equipment," said Jamie Schaefer-Wilson, a Westchester mother and child safety advocate.

"The time to act is now before another parent has to go through the agony that these parents have been forced to endure. These are preventable deaths. The technology is available that can prevent these tragedies. We urge auto makers and the federal government to address this critical public safety issue," said David Champion, senior director of automotive testing for Consumers Union, the publisher of Consumer Reports magazine.

The technology exists that can save children's lives at relatively low cost and new innovations are being developed all the time. Power window sensors, for example, cost only \$8-12 a window. Brakeshift interlocks are already standard in most passenger vehicles, but where they aren't, they cost only \$5 a car. Backover warning systems cost a bit more in today's market, approximately \$300 a car, but if these or similar technologies were required, the market would create even more competition and drive down the price.