



ADVOCATES
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Motor Vehicle Dangers That Are An Easy Fix Continue to Kill and Injure Children

Safety Groups, Survivor Advocates, and Members of Congress Urge Passage of Safety Law Requiring Federal Response

More than 32,000 Americans Sign Petition Demanding Action Consumers Union Releases “Best and Worst” List for Blind Zones

Child safety advocates and families whose children have been killed by vehicles in backover incidents, strangled by power windows or inadvertently knocked a vehicle into gear came to Capitol Hill today to urge Congress to pass legislation preventing these unnecessary deaths and injuries. Each week at least 3 children die and 175 more are injured because of deadly blind zones that obscure children when drivers back up, power windows that can be as lethal as guillotines to young children caught in their grip and other nontraffic incidents. Last year, at least 222 children died in non-traffic incidents. Since 1999, over 1,100 children have been killed with over 157 fatalities to date in 2006.

“The real tragedy is that all of these deaths could have been prevented with existing technology. We call on Congress to make the safety of our children and the passage of legislation to eliminate these dangers a priority before Members go home,” said Janette Fennell, Founder and President of KIDS AND CARS. Fennell and the families traveled to Washington, DC to unveil a petition signed by over 32,800 Americans urging Congress to enact the Cameron Gulbransen Kids and Cars Safety Act.

“Children are needlessly dying in red states and blue states”, said Bill Nelson from Dix Hills, NY whose son Alec was inadvertently backed over by a family member. “The 32,800 signatures represent families from every political ideology, every income level and every ethnic group. . More than 40 Republican and Democratic Members of Congress are co-sponsors of the Senate and House companion bills. This bill isn’t about politics. It’s about people, our children and public safety.” Bill, his wife, Adriann and their three children attended the press event.

Consumer Reports measures the blind zone behind every vehicle it tests, and has uncovered many vehicles that have dangerously large blind areas – including a 69 foot blind zone behind the 2006 Jeep Commander for a 5’ 1” driver. Tests reveal that those vehicles equipped with rearview cameras completely eliminate the blind zone.

“Unfortunately, the few vehicles that now come with this rear-view technology are higher-end models, and most devices are available only as a costly option,” said Sally Greenberg, Senior

Product Safety Counsel for Consumers Union, publisher of *Consumer Reports*. “We believe that rearview visibility is essential, and that we need for a federal safety standard. The cost is nominal compared to the value of a child’s life.”

Technology was exhibited that is currently available to improve rearward visibility and prevent power window strangulation.

“We don’t have to wait until tomorrow for a cure or medical breakthrough because effective and affordable technology is available today to solve the problem and prevent these deaths” said Jackie Gillan, Vice-President, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety. “These families traveled to Washington, DC from their homes to deliver the message that too many children are dying and too few automakers are making lifesaving technologies available to consumers. We have demonstrated the public support, now all we need is the political will.” she added.

The Cameron Gulbransen Kids And Cars Safety Act (S. 1948 and HR 2230), sponsored by Senators Clinton and Sununu in the Senate and Representatives King and Schakowsky in the House, address non-traffic safety problems. These bills would decrease the incidence of child injury and death by:

- Providing drivers with a means of detecting the presence of a person or object behind their vehicle;
- Ensuring power windows automatically reverse direction when they detect an obstruction to prevent children from being trapped, injured or killed;
- Providing for the vehicle service brake to be engaged to prevent vehicles from unintentionally rolling away (Senate version only);
- Providing for a reminder system for drivers who might inadvertently leave a child behind in the backseat of a vehicle, resulting in injuries and deaths from hyperthermia or other causes (House version only);
- Establishing a child safety program to disseminate information to parents about these hazards and ways to mitigate them.

The legislation does not mandate any specific type of safety technology but directs the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to issue safety standards.

Six families of children who were killed in recent non-traffic incidents came to share their stories in the hope that other parents would be spared future losses. They joined Senators John E. Sununu (R-NH) and Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY), Congressman Peter King (R-NY) and Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) in asking the 109th Congress to take action before adjournment in October to help prevent such tragic incidents in the future. The families who traveled to Washington in support of S. 1948 and HR 2230 are:

Bob Hedmark of Niagara, Wisconsin, Aaron Chatten of Glasgow, Montana,
Britt Gates of Anthony, Kansas Sue Auriemma of Manhasset, New York and Bill &
Adriann Nelson of Dix Hills, New York

“Best and Worst” list available at www.consumerreports.org. Information about KIDS AND CARS is available at www.KidsAndCars.org. Information about Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety is available at www.saferoads.org.

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