

Consumer Product Safety Improvement ...or the lead in books in libraries issue

Nebraska congressman introduces bill to amend consumer safety act

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American Library Association

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – The American Library Association (ALA) supports legislation introduced by U.S. Rep. Jeff Fortenberry (R-Neb.) yesterday to amend the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA) to exempt ordinary books from the lead limit within the act. This is a welcome step toward ensuring libraries will not be adversely affected by the law.

In August 2008, Congress passed CPSIA, an important law to protect children from the real dangers of toys made with lead-based paint; however, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) misinterpreted the law to apply to ordinary books for children 12 years of age or younger.

The law was set to go into effect on February 10, 2009, but in late January 2009, the CPSC issued a one-year stay of implementation for enforcement of the new lead limits in children's products, stating that the commission will not impose penalties against anyone for making, importing, distributing or selling a children's product to the extent that it is made of certain natural materials, such as an ordinary children's book printed after 1985.

Fortenberry's bill, H.R. 1692, would remove the pre-1985 provision and states that CPSIA was not intended to apply to ordinary books – those books that are published on paper or cardboard, printed by conventional publishing methods, intended to be read, and lacking inherent play value. H.R. 1692 also states that testing has shown that finished books and their component materials contain total lead content at levels considered non-detectable, and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has determined that there is little risk to children from lead in ordinary books.

"We are grateful for this bill since it supports what the ALA, libraries, teachers and parents know to be true – books are safe and should not be regulated by this law," ALA President Jim Rettig said.

"Reading is critical to child development, and libraries should be free to continue providing services to children without the fear of having to comply with unnecessary and expensive testing. Rep. Fortenberry's bill corrects the CPSC's misinterpretation that would deny our children access to books and limit their opportunities to learn."