

# CPSC to Face Congressional Review for Failure to Protect the Public From Hazards of Wired Glass



PRESS RELEASE  
SEN. VICKI L. WALKER  
STATE SENATOR, DISTRICT 7

**Eugene** – Senator Vicki Walker (D-Eugene), and Greg Abel, Chair of Advocates for Safe Glass (AFSG) of Eugene, Oregon, returned to Washington, D.C., in late April to meet with nearly 20 members of Congress to address the safety hazards of wired glass. Many of the meetings were arranged by the office of U.S. Representative Peter DeFazio (D-Springfield) to signal the 4th District Congressman's interest in this issue.

Walker and Abel spent nearly a week on Capitol Hill as they met with members of the House and Senate, both Democrat and Republican, and members of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. They focused on members of the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection; and the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. "We were delighted with the positive response, and continue to brief additional members by conference call and follow-up meetings," said Walker and Able.

## **Congressionals Briefed on CPSC's Negligence**

Walker and Able met with several of the Congressional offices for the two House Subcommittees. Rep. Peter DeFazio spearheaded the effort by sending an e-mail to the members, giving them a brief overview of the issue, and arranging the meeting schedule. Walker and Abel then went to work, armed with briefing papers and injury data to show that the Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) has been negligent in protecting the health and safety of Americans. They explained the safety hazards of wired glass, that it results in thousands of debilitating and life-threatening injuries to those who impact it; the fact that the industry has enjoyed an exemption from impact safety granted to it by the Consumer Product Safety Commission in 1977, and that there are alternative products that are much safer and just as effective that are made in America. The entire world supply of wired glass is produced by foreign – three in Japan, and one in the United Kingdom

Walker and Abel stressed the fact they had given a very detailed and comprehensive presentation to the CPSC in October 2003, asking them to support a petition to remove the wired glass exemption, or to request the CPSC to issue a safety advisory regarding the use of wired glass. "We are frustrated by the slow response and the historical failure on the part of the CPSC with regards to this issue," Walker told the Congressionals. Mr. Abel added that: "In the absence of federal regulations, the wired glass industry has adopted a voluntary lower safety test standard that does not even protect a five-year-old child from injury upon impact."

## **Congressionals Briefed on Oregon Success**

Walker and Able also briefed the members on how Oregon has taken a leadership role in adopting new International Code Council (ICC) safety regulation regarding wired glass. The new codes limit the use of wired glass in hazardous locations in K-12 schools, and in athletic facilities. Oregon's standards became effective October 1 2003; other states are adopting the new standard as their old codes expire. Oregon became the first state in the nation to take the regulations one step further by limiting the use of wired glass in hazardous locations in all other structures beginning October 1, 2004, something that Advocates for Safe Glass has proposed to the ICC 9Code Change s85-03/04) when it meets in Overland Park, Kansas, May 16-20. "We'd like to extend the same protection to college facilities, dormitories, libraries, commercial building and all other structures," said Able, whose son Jarred was injured at the University of Oregon in January 2001.

## **Congressionals Express Support and Pledge to take Action**

By week's end, Walker and Abel had received pledges of support and action from every office they visited, including Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah). A bill was being drafted by Rep. DeFazio; a new letter to CPSC was being drafted for circulation to other members, also by Rep. DeFazio; letters and e-mails asking for Congressional hearing were in the process; contacts were to be made with the international Code Council; and callers were being made to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to follow up on Walker and Abel's visit to the FTC in October expressing concerns about consumer fraud relating to test data, false representation of product safety, and issues relating to unfair trade practices. Other members of Oregon's delegation (Reps. Wu and Blumehauer), had previously written letters of support when Walker and Abel visited them in October. And Sen. Gordon Smith has recently drafted a letter in support of Mr. Abel's code change proposal before the ICC, stating "As a father myself, I am especially

concerned that safety standards are adhered to not only in schools and gymnasiums, but also in college dormitories, public libraries, hospitals other buildings.”

“We are pleased that Congress has taken a strong and immediate interest in this issue, particularly in light of the fact we have seen so many serious and debilitating injuries.” Said Walker and Abel. Advocates for Safe Glass has seen an increase in visits to its Web site ([www.safeglass.org](http://www.safeglass.org)) and e-mails from parents injured children since the issue received nationwide attention on the CBS Evening News with Dan Rather on April 9. Correspondent Sandra Hughes interviewed Walker and Abel for the story, [“Safety Glass: Anything But.”](#) Greg Abel formed the nonprofit organization, Advocates for Safe glass, shortly after his son, Jarred was injured when his hand impacted wired glass after playing basketball in University of Oregon gymnasium in January 2001.