

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE NANCY A. NORD ACTING
CHAIRMAN U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION

BALLOT VOTE
(NPR UPHOLSTERED FURNITURE)

February 1, 2008

I am voting today to approve the notice of proposed rulemaking (“NPR”) to address the flammability of upholstered furniture.

Fires involving upholstered furniture are a leading cause of fire-related deaths and injuries in U.S. homes. The overwhelming number of upholstered furniture fires are caused by smoldering cigarettes. According to the November 2007 briefing package, furniture ignited by smoking materials account for approximately 90% of deaths and 65% of the injuries from these fires.

The standard that is being proposed today is intended to reduce the risk from these fires and save many, many lives. The proposal would prevent ignition or slow the spread and intensity of upholstered furniture fires, giving consumers precious time to get out of their homes.

Importantly, the standard will address upholstered furniture fires without any adverse impact on environmental safety and health. I am pleased that the NPR addresses upholstered furniture fires without requiring the use of fire retardant (“FR”) chemicals. I was concerned that a previous proposal would require extensive use of FR chemicals and the health effects of some of these chemicals are not well-understood. Therefore I directed the staff to try to address the fire risk associated with upholstered furniture without encouraging the use of FR chemicals. This NPR is a result of that work.

The Commission has been working on an upholstered furniture flammability standard since 1994 and over these many years the Commission has heard from a variety of stakeholders, including consumer and environmental advocacy groups, industry, fire service organizations, as well as Congress, state, federal and international government bodies. We have worked hard to address the concerns presented by these various groups. This is the second major rule to be considered by this agency. It addresses an extremely complex but very important issue of consumer protection. As Acting Chairman, I am pleased that we are moving forward with the NPR under my tenure and I look forward to receiving comments from the public.