



U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION
4330 EAST WEST HIGHWAY
BETHESDA, MD 20814

STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER ANNE M. NORTHUP ON THE
FISCAL YEAR 2010 MID-YEAR REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

June 4, 2010

Today I voted to send \$7.1 million in extra agency funds available for internal reallocation back to the U.S. Treasury in order to help reduce the federal budget deficit. At a time when the federal debt is over \$13 trillion (every household owes over \$500,000 due to unfunded federal commitments),¹ I cannot support the Commission's plan to reallocate this extra money that we do not need to spend.

The Commission's budget has grown at a remarkable pace since 2008, mostly due to the passage of the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008 (CPSIA). This law passed in response to a flood of toys recalled with lead paint. As Congress has become aware of the law's overreach, however, Members of both parties have introduced bills to amend the law significantly.

As a result of two consecutive years of large budget increases and the naturally gradual but steady pace taken to fill dozens of new CPSIA-related positions agency-wide, the Commission has ended up with approximately \$7.1 million in extra funds this year (including about \$5.7 million unspent for salaries). I do not fault the Commission for failing to make all of its new hires immediately upon receiving budgetary approval for them; indeed, the Commission is still on schedule to meet the hiring goals given by Congress. However, just because we will not be able to spend our *entire* annual budget (all \$118 million) as originally planned does not mean we must invent other ways to spend it mid-year.

As a Commissioner, I am responsible not only for fulfilling the safety mission of this agency, but also for being a good steward of the taxpayers' hard-earned dollars. Not a day goes by when a headline in a major newspaper does not mention the growing federal deficit (projected to be \$1.4 trillion this fiscal year),² the staggering national debt, or exploding entitlements that threaten to bankrupt our country.

Seven million dollars may not be a large figure for the federal government. In truth, no single federal agency or department can even come close to solving our country's fiscal crisis, and it would be easy for the CPSC to do nothing and assume "it's not our problem." On the other hand, if every federal agency this year were to allow its unspent funds to revert to the Treasury instead of going on a new spending spree, it would make a difference.

¹ "Leap in U.S. Debt Hits Taxpayers with 12% More Red Ink," Dennis Cauchon, *USA Today*, May 29, 2009.
<http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2009-05-28-debt_N.htm>

² "Gross National Debt: \$13 Trillion and Counting," May 21, 2010,
<http://rpc.senate.gov/public/?p=TaxesSpending&ContentRecord_id=4d03cb57-aa3a-494c-9559-c6ba246e7e57&ContentType_id=3d1f05d6-ed37-4dea-897e-e41bafd0e109&d77c912a-2c22-4843-a17b-96c2f091d607&52b58cdf-6a90-410a-b4d7-fead13c38a57&48a8eee4-33df-4bce-b6bd-710c426ab3e1&Group_id=dc98959b-ee1e-4f26-af39-0b90effcf1d2>

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the federal government currently is spending 67 percent more than it is earning. For an average household, that equates to earning \$62,000 per year but spending \$105,000 per year³—and of course doing so every year with no plan to stop. I regret that my colleagues did not join in supporting my decision today to make a small contribution toward reducing the federal deficit—and a significant statement in support of fiscal responsibility.

³ Ibid.