

Oral Testimony of the American National Standards Institute

**before the
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government**

**Testimony on Enhancing the Safety of our Toys:
Lead Paint, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and Toy Safety Standards**

September 12, 2007

Statement of

S. Joe Bhatia, President and Chief Executive Officer
American National Standards Institute
1819 L Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
jbhatia@ansi.org; 202.331.3605

Thank you, Chairman Durbin. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

My name is Joe Bhatia and I am president and chief executive officer of the American National Standards Institute.

ANSI is coordinator of this nation's private-sector led and public sector-supported voluntary consensus standards and conformity assessment system. We speak as the U.S. voice in standardization forums around the globe.

And, through our network of members, we represent the interests of more than 125,000 companies and 3.5 million professionals worldwide.

Protecting the safety of consumers is of paramount importance to the Institute. It is a key element of our mission – and we are committed to its implementation.

This hearing is necessary not because there is an issue with existing standards, but because some suppliers – particularly those who are exporting products to U.S. soil – are not complying with the rigorous standards and regulations that have been established to keep our citizens safe.

Carter Keithley, who sits with me on this panel, has asked ANSI to work with the U.S. toy industry to build upon its current safety standards and compliance systems and make them better.

We will engage the CPSC and other regulators to ensure that their concerns are adequately addressed in formulating our solutions.

We need a system that is consistent and sustainable.

We will focus our attention on the entire supply chain, improving how products are evaluated and assessing who is conducting the evaluations.

Our first step is to develop and standardize procedures that can be used across the toy industry to verify that products comply with agreed safety requirements, regardless of whether those requirements are defined in a voluntary standard or a federal regulation.

Our second step is to help the toy industry develop the tools they need to evaluate the competence of the organizations they are relying upon to conduct safety assessments.

Our solutions will draw from a toolbox of conformity assessment resources. Not just testing and inspection, but also systems auditing, accredited certification programs, subcontractor and sub-subcontractor assessment and – of course – education and training.

To meet the immediate need, the toy industry has announced that they are already taking decisive action to remove unsafe products from distribution and to ensure the integrity of the import safety net.

ANSI is working with the toy industry to develop a long-term solution, not a system to review what is on the shelves for this Christmas.

The development of systems that can be implemented across an entire industry may carry over into 2008.

ANSI is committed to building into the global supply chain a sustainable approach to compliance verification. We will work not only with domestic entities but also with our international partners.

ANSI knows how to leverage standards and compliance systems to create solutions that engage all stakeholders and satisfy their needs. During its 90 year history, the Institute has demonstrated a unique ability to bring together in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration representatives from industry, trade associations, professional and technical societies, government, labor and consumer groups.

For example,

- we have teamed with the Council of Better Business Bureaus to tackle identity theft.
- we partnered with the 9-11 Commission and continue to work with the DHS to address homeland security.

- we were asked by the Office of Science and Technology Policy in the Executive Office of the President to take the lead in nanotechnology initiatives, and
- we are helping HHS to develop a secure electronic health record for every American.

Mr. Chairman, members of this Committee, ANSI wants to help reassure consumers that the products they find on store shelves have been examined and found to be safe – not just from current hazards, such as lead paint, but also potential hazards yet unknown.

I invite everyone in this room to join with us on September 26 for an ANSI-hosted conference that is focused specifically on building consumer confidence in the products that enter the U.S. marketplace.

To create a safer consumer environment . . .

- We need to make more efficient use of the standards and conformity assessment resources that are already in place . . . and we need to identify every gap that exists.
- We also need to bring to bear new human and financial resources that can strengthen existing systems and satisfy the identified needs.

In some cases, it may be necessary to elevate certain requirements from voluntary to mandatory status. But CPSC and the other regulatory bodies that oversee consumer health and safety issues will not be able to handle the workload alone – even with additional funding.

Government and industry need to work at a single purpose if we are to restore consumer confidence in imported goods.

ANSI stands ready to help coordinate the public/private partnership. We've done it often and we're good at it.

Thank you. I welcome your questions.

– END –