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**THREE CHILDREN KILLED EACH WEEK IN PREVENTABLE
AUTO-RELATED DEATHS FOCUS OF COALITION'S CAMPAIGN**
Groups, legislators urge Congressional action to prevent these deadly vehicle incidents

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Most parents think it will never happen to them. But far too many children are being killed in vehicle-related incidents, with a large number involving a parent or family member. Whether they are backed over because the driver cannot see them or they are strangled by excessively powerful electric windows, parents and families across the country are forced to endure the worst tragedy imaginable. What is even worse: these tragedies are preventable.

In an effort to prevent these tragedies, Representatives Peter King (R-NY) and Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) have introduced the “Cameron Gulbransen Kids And Cars Safety Act of 2005” (HR2230), named in memory of a backover victim from Long Island. This legislation would require automobile manufacturers, among other things, to make technology standard on all vehicles to allow drivers to see what is behind them when backing up their vehicle. Representatives King and Schakowsky today joined Kids And Cars and Consumers Union, along with parents of victims from around the country, to highlight the need for federal involvement in stopping these preventable tragedies and urge Congress to act on this sensible legislation.

“All the parents I know would move Heaven and Earth to prevent the injury or death of their child,” said Janette Fennell, founder of Kids And Cars. “Still, no parent is perfect and the penalty of just one second of distraction should not result in tragedy. It is vital Congress makes these technologies mandatory to put an end to these preventable tragedies. The opportunity is here and Congress must seize it.”

The statistics, compiled by Kids And Cars as no government agency keeps such data, are staggering. This year alone, at least 132 children have been involved in non-traffic related incidents on private property. Sixty-seven of those children lost their life. In 2004, 523 children were involved in similar incidents, with at least 165 children dying. The vast majority of these fatalities were due to dangerous features of vehicles that could easily be made safer.

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“Since 1999, at least 800 children have died in non-traffic related incidents with vehicles,” Fennell said. “Many of these could have been prevented by common sense solutions to make vehicles safer that have been available for years. I sincerely hope it will not take another 800 children to lose their lives before the auto industry or Congress takes action and prevents these senseless tragedies.”

While some of these tragedies are a result of strangulation in power windows or parents inadvertently leaving a child inside a hot car, the majority are a result of backovers. Many family vehicles today, such as SUVs and minivans, have enormous blind zones that prevent drivers from seeing what is behind them. In some cases, the length of these blind zones is greater than that of the average driveway. Technologies, in the form of rearward viewing cameras and sensors, are readily available that would allow drivers to know if something or someone was behind them at all times. Currently, this technology is only available on a select few vehicles, or as an after-market product you have to purchase yourself. The bill introduced by Representatives King and Schakowsky would make such technology standard on all vehicles. In addition, the legislation would make technology that prevents strangulation by power windows and reminds drivers when passengers remain in the rear seats standard in all vehicles, as well.

“It was a tough fight to get automakers to make seat belts and air bags standard equipment, but they did and this safety equipment has saved thousands of lives,” said Sally Greenberg, senior counsel at Consumers Union. “The very same principles apply here: Backover deaths and other vehicle-related incidents can be prevented. The technology is here. The opportunity is now. It is time for Congress to act.”

Kids And Cars (www.KidsAndCars.org) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to assure no child dies or is injured in a non-traffic, non-crash motor vehicle related event. Consumers Union is the nonprofit publisher of *Consumer Reports*, which measures the blind zones for all vehicles it tests. Information on the blind zones for many new vehicles can be found for free at www.consumerreports.org/co/vehicleblindspots. More information is also available at www.consumersunion.org.

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