



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 109th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 151

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 2005

No. 42

House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

THE SPEAKER'S ROOMS,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Washington, DC, April 12, 2005.

I hereby appoint the Honorable J. GRESHAM BARRETT to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) for 5 minutes.

EXPRESSING DEEP SADNESS AT THE TRAGIC DEATH OF MEGHAN AGNES BECK AND THANKING THE BECK FAMILY FOR THEIR EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF CHILDREN'S SAFETY

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with deep sadness at the tragic death of Meghan Agnes Beck of Sterling, Massachusetts. Meghan died on December 18, 2004, at the young age of 3 years old. She died from injuries sustained as a result of her dresser falling

on top of her in the early morning while the rest of her family was sleeping.

Meghan was a beautiful young girl full of confidence and life. She leaves behind her twin brother Ryan, older brother Kyle, and her parents Ralph and Kimberly. Despite their sadness and pain, Meghan's parents are moving forward, spreading a message to other parents around the country. They are raising awareness about the importance of preventing furniture tip-overs that can result in injury or death to children.

Sadly, Meghan is not the first child to die from falling furniture, but the Becks hope that they can help prevent this tragedy from happening to another child. The Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that 8,000 to 10,000 children are injured each year from furniture that falls or tips or from items on top of furniture or shelves that fall off onto the child. An average of six children tragically die each year, as Meghan did.

Through a Web site titled Meghan's Hope, her parents are bringing together fellow American families who have suffered pain from the loss or injury of a child to spread the word about furniture safety. The mission of Meghan's Hope is to make available resources and information regarding furniture safety.

Via the Web site, parents from around the country have a place to share stories, thoughts and ideas with one another. Thanks to Ralph and Kimberly Beck's efforts, awareness is rising; and more parents are taking note of the importance of securing furniture around the house.

The Web site offers several helpful suggestions for families. These include:

Securing furniture to the walls to prevent tip-overs. This includes dressers, bookcases, entertainment cabinets, TVs, toy boxes, large appliances, or any piece of furniture with shelves or drawers that can be climbed on;

Purchasing furniture ties or brackets. These should be screwed into both the wall, into a beam, and the furniture itself. If a wood beam is not accessible, use mollies or toggle bolts to give added strength;

Placing TVs on low, stable units with large bases and as far back as possible in the shelf. Secure all TV sets to the wall. Devices are sold for this purpose;

Anchoring freestanding bookcases, no matter how large or small, to the walls;

Not placing heavy or other items of interest to a child on top of the furniture or higher than a comfortable reach for the smallest child so as not to entice them to climb for it;

Putting heavy items on the lowest shelf or drawer;

And sharing this information with everyone you know.

In addition, there are things the furniture and retail industries can do, and the Becks have developed some excellent ideas. They include:

Encouraging all stores that sell furniture to also provide literature on furniture safety and to sell the safety straps;

Encouraging all furniture manufacturers to voluntarily include warning labels on furniture and information on the dangers of furniture tip-overs, recommending that the buyer secure the piece to the wall with the proper restraining devices. Ideally, the manufacturer would provide this information with the furniture until safety standard legislation is developed;

Encouraging stores that sell child safety products to also sell furniture safety straps. Many do not carry them, including large department stores and home improvement stores;

And encouraging physicians and child safety instructors to discuss furniture safety with parents.

Mr. Speaker, through this terrible loss, the Beck family has shown great strength and determination to spread

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

H1853