



UNITED STATES  
CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION  
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COMMISSIONER ANNE M. NORTHUP

STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER ANNE M. NORTHUP ON THE CPSC'S PERFORMANCE BUDGET  
REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2013

February 13, 2012

I respect the Chairman's prerogative to set the agency's priorities and allocate its resources, and will work to achieve the agency's safety goals as reflected in the Consumer Product Safety Commission's 2013 budget. As a Commissioner, however, I am responsible both for advancing the safety mission of the agency and being a good steward of taxpayer dollars. While my vote was not intended to oppose the budget, I am unable to endorse it, because I disagree with many of the funding choices it contains.

The agency Chair controls the process through which the annual budget is prepared, both by establishing the agency's goals and priorities, and by exercising her authority over agency personnel to direct that the budget be prepared according to her design. The product that comes before the Commission is a long and detailed document specifying the amount of funding sought for the fiscal year, as well as precisely how the money will be allocated among the agency's strategic goals. Individual commissioners do not have a meaningful opportunity to influence the agency's budget, and are instead called upon to approve or disapprove the budget as presented by the Chair.

My main concern with the budget is the wastefulness of the enormous new investment in the Information Technology (IT) program. After already spending over 29 million dollars to "upgrade and improve" its IT systems, the Commission now seeks an additional \$7.44 million to continue the work, and neither figure includes the millions of additional dollars in Commission staff time. The results so far are not encouraging. The public database, which as designed by the Commission, I opposed, has resulted in a product with no chance of being useful to consumers. Its public interface is so primitive, cumbersome and limited in the scope of information it contains, that a consumer seeking information on the safety of a product would be far better served by one of the many private sector clearinghouses for consumer product information, such as Amazon.com, than by our publically funded portal. Meanwhile, the IT resources used by Commission staff are overburdened by the new systems, causing slow computers and frequent network problems. The staff time and resources dedicated to the Commission's IT program over the last several years and projected into the future would be better focused on the agency's core safety mission or on a more efficient and effective approach to upgrading its IT systems.

At a time when every agency is being asked to conserve resources to reduce the national debt and relieve taxpayer burden, the Commission must do its part by performing its safety mission in the most efficient and cost effective manner possible. Instead, the Commission is requesting an additional budget *increase* on top of the last four years of substantial budget increases, and intends to spend the money on priorities that will not enhance consumer safety. I cannot endorse the budget under these circumstances, but am committed to assist the Chair in carrying out her priorities and goals as the leader of the agency.