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HOUSE AND SENATE VOTE TO PROTECT AMERICA'S EYES FROM DANGERS OF COSMETIC CONTACT LENSES

Non-Profit and Eye Care Professional Groups Applaud Passage of Bills, Hope to Gain President's Support

CHICAGO (Oct. 27, 2005) – After more than a year of combined efforts from leading volunteer eye health and safety organizations including Prevent Blindness America (PBA), and major eye care professional groups, both the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives have passed legislation that will require consumers to obtain a prescription from a licensed professional to purchase contact lenses. The bill, S. 172, will now be presented to President George W. Bush to be signed into law.

The Senate bill, sponsored by Sens. Mike DeWine, R-Ohio, and Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., passed in July of this year and was passed yesterday in the House with sponsorship by Reps. John Boozman, R-Ark., and Henry Waxman, D-Calif. The bills now classify cosmetic contact lenses, or “plano” lenses, as medical devices. In April 2003, the FDA re-categorized non-vision correcting cosmetic contact lenses as cosmetic devices. This is the second time in as many years that the House has passed the legislation. In 2004, the issue was not voted on by the Senate.

“PBA would like to extend our thanks and appreciation for the outstanding leadership of Sen. DeWine and Sen. Kennedy, and Rep. Boozman and Rep. Waxman, both strong members of the Congressional Vision Caucus,” said Daniel D. Garrett, senior vice president of PBA. “They have all demonstrated their dedication to protecting the gift of sight through their support of this measure.”

PBA, the nation's oldest and largest organization dedicated to preserving sight, commends the work of all groups that joined together to promote the legislation, including American Academy of Ophthalmology, the American Optometric Association, the Opticians Association of America, the Contact Lens Association of Ophthalmologists and the Contact Lens Institute. PBA developed its own grassroots campaign to urge government representatives to learn more about the issue and vote to protect the vision of their own constituents. Through the “Contact Congress” section on its Web site, phone numbers, mailing and e-mail addresses of legislators were provided to the public, state by state. That effort alone generated hundreds of calls, letters and e-mails from concerned citizens.

“We have taken another giant step in helping to protect the eyes of all Americans,” added Garrett. “We hope President Bush will see the importance of this bill and sign it into law immediately.”

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PBA Urges President Bush to Protect America's Eyes From Dangerous Lenses

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For more information on the dangers of cosmetic contact lenses, please call PBA at 1-800-331-2020 or visit www.preventblindness.org.

About Prevent Blindness America

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, divisions and chapters, it's committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020 or visit us on the Web at www.preventblindness.org.

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