

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information:
Prevent Blindness America
Sarah Hecker
(312) 363-6035

SENATE PASSES BILL TO PROTECT CONSUMERS FROM COSMETIC CONTACT LENS RISKS

***Leading Volunteer and Eye Care Professional Groups
Hope to Help Pass the Measure in the House***

CHICAGO (Aug. 3, 2005) – Because of recent eye health and safety concerns regarding the use of cosmetic contact lenses without the guidance of eye care professionals, the U.S. Senate on July 29, 2005, passed a bill declaring that all contact lenses should be classified as medical devices. If the companion bill in the House of Representatives passes (HR 371), consumers of cosmetic or “plano” lenses would require a prescription from a licensed professional to purchase the lenses.

Although cosmetic contact lenses offer no visual correction, until two years ago, they were categorized as Class II or Class III medical devices by the Food and Drug Administration. However, in April 2003, the FDA changed this policy, re-categorizing non-vision correcting cosmetic contact lenses as cosmetic devices, making their regulation much less stringent.

Legislation for this same issue was introduced last year and passed in the House, but was not presented to the Senate. Because of this, Prevent Blindness America (PBA), a national non-profit organization, challenged its affiliates and volunteers across the country to contact their state senators and representatives to urge them to pass the bills. In addition, PBA developed a special “Contact Congress” section on its Web site which gave constituents the phone numbers, mailing and e-mail addresses of the legislators for their areas. In total, more than 300 letters and e-mails were sent as well as hundreds of calls made.

“We are thrilled to see our powerful grassroots movement of patients and consumers across the country make an impact on such an important issue,” said Daniel D. Garrett, senior vice president of PBA. “Thanks to the combined efforts of professional organizations and volunteer groups like ours, we were able to take another step closer to protecting the eyes of all Americans.”

Other groups supporting the measures include a wide range of professional, patient advocacy, and industry groups, including the American Academy of Ophthalmology, the American Optometric Association, the Contact Lens Association of Ophthalmologists and the Contact Lens Institute.

PBA continues to engage Congress in several advocacy efforts designed to improve vision care for all Americans. In 2004, PBA helped to form the Congressional Vision Caucus to work with legislators to champion vision health policies at the federal

PBA Joins Leading Eye Care Professional Groups to Help Pass Cosmetic Contact Lens Safety Bill in Senate

Page 2

level. Through this effort, the "Vision Preservation Act of 2005" was proposed, (HR-2671), to strengthen vision loss research and prevention programs at both the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and calls for increased awareness of vision problems by identifying key steps in prevention and public health.

To urge your Representative to pass the cosmetic contact lens classification initiative promoting safety, please call PBA at 1-800-331-2020 or log on to www.preventblindness.org/advocacy.

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.

###