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DANGEROUS LEAD LEVELS IN CAPITOL GIFT SHOP PRODUCTS

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Rep. Henry A. Waxman and Sen. Barack Obama released a report finding dangerous lead levels in jewelry and other inexpensive children's gifts sold in the four Capitol gift shops.

The Special Investigations Division of the minority staff of the Government Reform Committee found that seven of thirteen items tested contained dangerous levels of lead. One silver-plated bracelet that sold for $4.95 contained 38% lead, a potentially lethal amount of lead. The items were removed from the shops when the management was notified of the preliminary testing results.

"Lead in jewelry and other products used by young children is dangerous and unnecessary," said Rep. Waxman. "No parents should have to worry that a gift or souvenir purchased in the Capitol will poison their children. The Bush Administration should give families an early holiday gift by banning these unsafe products."

"As a parent of two young children, it's frightening to think that a toy or memento like the ones sold in the Capitol gift shops could unknowingly expose my daughters to toxic lead," said Obama. "But as recently as 2003, millions of pieces of toy jewelry had to be recalled from store shelves because they contained dangerously high levels of lead, and one popular lunchbox was found to contain more than 90 times more lead than the legal limit. It's long past time that we get dangerous lead out of kid's toys. That would be one of the best gifts the Administration could give parents this holiday season."

There is no known safe level of lead exposure for children. Dangerous – or even fatal – blood lead levels may result from a single acute exposure to lead or repeated exposure to smaller doses. Children have died from ingesting lead-containing jewelry and other trinkets.

Rep. Waxman and Sen. Obama have repeatedly asked the Consumer Product Safety Commission to ban the use of lead in children's products. They have also introduced legislation to require the Consumer Product Safety Commission to ban lead in children's products under the Hazardous Substances Act. On December 4, the CPSC scientific staff took an important first step, recommending that CPSC adopt a mandatory limit on lead in children's jewelry.

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