

Senator Luann Ridgeway
Capitol Report
April 11, 2008

Last fall, a Clay County toddler was crushed as a dresser he was trying to climb upon fell on top of him.

Charlie Horn, just 2-years-old, died from his injuries.

What makes Charlie's death even more devastating is that there was no indication that furniture of the size involved in his death, posed danger. The dresser was only 30 inches high.

This tragic accident is unfortunately an all-too-common occurrence in households across the country. Falling furniture hurts or kills thousands of children each year, making tipping furniture one of the biggest household dangers for kids. Since Charlie's death on Nov. 1, 2007, seven other children in the U.S. have been killed by falling furniture or televisions.

I'm sponsoring a resolution urging Congress and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to take a serious look at our regulations regarding furniture safety. We need to strengthen the incentives for furniture manufacturers to use the American Society for Testing and Materials International's (ASTM) furniture safety standards, as well as educate parents about the dangers of tipping furniture and tell them what they can do to help prevent tragedy from striking their family.

This week the Senate Rules Committee passed my resolution, [SCR 40](#) and it will soon be taken up by the whole Senate for discussion. Charlie's mother, Jenny Horn, gave compelling testimony recounting the tragedy. Both Charlie's mother and father are bravely working to raise awareness to prevent any other parent from suffering the heartache they daily endure.

Furniture tipping most often occurs when a child tries to climb the front of the furniture, using the bottom drawer or shelf as a step. In some cases, the extra weight causes the furniture to tip forward onto the child.

The CPSC has rated furniture tip-overs as the number three hidden danger in our homes. It estimates that 3,000 children under the age of five go to the emergency room each year with injuries caused by falling furniture or TV's, and at least 100 people — mostly young children — have been killed since 2000 by this household danger. Children involved in tip-over accidents may suffer crush injuries, but suffocation is also a risk when a child is pinned beneath a very heavy piece of furniture, unable to call for help.

Along with producing safer furniture and application of warning labels, we can easily prevent most tip-overs through the use of anchoring devices, as well as educating parents about the dangers and the ways they can help avoid the tragic loss suffered by the Horn family.

Jenny Horn was prompt in pointing out that parents are ultimately responsible for the safety of their children. However, there was no warning or information to make anyone think that furniture of this small size posed danger.

We can help put a stop to these heartbreaking accidents, just by toughening the regulations and promoting awareness. Young lives should not end because of senseless accidents that could be prevented by safety standards, education and something as simple as an anchor in the wall.

My resolution should be debated by the full Senate next week. If you have any questions about these issues or any other legislation, please contact my office at (573) 751-2547 or email me at luann.ridgeway@senate.mo.gov.