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October 5, 2018 - WASHINGTON, D.C. - On Thursday, Senators Roger Wicker (R-MS) and Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) introduced the Safer Occupancy Furniture Flammability Act (SOFFA). Senate Bill 3551 is legislation that would require the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to adopt California Technical Bulletin 117-2013 as a federal flammability standard.

A House version of the AHFA-backed bill, HB 4220, was introduced in November 2017 by Rep. Morgan Griffith (R-VA).

“SOFFA, provides a workable solution to a 40-year stalemate over upholstered furniture flammability at CPSC. California’s TB 117-2013 is a proven and effective standard that helps protect consumers and reduces the risk of upholstered furniture fires,” said AHFA CEO Andy Counts.

TB 117-2013 outlines performance standards and methods for testing the smolder resistance of cover fabrics, barrier materials, filling materials and decking materials used in upholstered furniture. It was endorsed by a broad coalition of stakeholders, including AHFA, fire fighters, fire scientists, environmentalists and consumer groups.

In October 2015, AHFA formally petitioned the CPSC to adopt the performance standards and test methods prescribed by TB 117-2013 as a national, mandatory flammability standard for residential furniture. The agency subsequently directed its staff to prepare a briefing package evaluating the feasibility, benefits and costs of adopting the measure.

CPSC staff completed the briefing package in September 2016. It recommended against adopting TB 117-2013 and instead advised the commissioners to pursue “alternative approaches that address the hazard through a combination of research, education and outreach, and voluntary standards efforts.” However, to date, no alternative approaches to the TB 117-2013 standard have been proposed by the commission.

“By making TB 117-2013 a national standard, we can ensure that all upholstered residential furniture sold in the United States meets a rigorous fire safety threshold. SOFFA would mandate the best test methods and construction standards we have today but would not prohibit the CPSC from future rulemaking if new fire safety technologies become available,” Counts said.

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