

Statement of Commissioner Alexander Hoehn-Saric on Unlawful Termination

May 9, 2025

Last night, my Democratic colleagues received an email from the White House purporting to fire them from their positions. While I have received no communications from the White House, the Acting Chair is preventing me from executing my duties as Commissioner based on an assertion that the President is also seeking my removal.

The President's action is unlawful and is part of this Administration's efforts to eliminate federal agencies, personnel, and policies that have made Americans safer.

I was appointed by the President in 2021 and unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate to the positions of Chairman and Commissioner at the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). In January, I resigned my position as Chairman but made clear my intention to remain as a Commissioner until my term expires in October 2027. The Federal law establishing the CPSC, which has stood for more than 50 years and is valid under Supreme Court precedent, states that Commissioners can only be removed only for "malfeasance or neglect of duty." The President cannot credibly accuse me of such behavior.

The CPSC was created in the 1970s to protect the American public from unreasonable risks of injury and death related to consumer products. For example, we prevent toys coated in lead from reaching children's homes and schools, set safety standards for cribs and other baby products to reduce strangulation and suffocation, and stop the importation of hazardous eldercare products.

In my first week as Chair, the CPSC issued a recall of a scented spray contaminated with deadly bacteria that had killed two people, including a young child. And in the weeks that followed, I met with parents whose children died from preventable accidents due to furniture tip-overs, window blind cord strangulations, and button cell battery ingestion. Over the next few years, we worked to address these hazards by establishing common sense safety standards.

The work of the CPSC – like that of so many other federal agencies – is often unseen when it is successful. The CPSC focuses on preventing tragedies related to consumer products so that deaths and injuries do not occur. Since our founding, crib deaths have dropped by 80 percent, serious injuries associated with baby walkers have nearly disappeared, and children are no longer getting crushed under automatic garage doors.

Congress and the President established the CPSC as an independent, bi-partisan agency with five Commissioners whose terms cut across Presidential administrations in order to protect the public and limit undue political influence on these types of fact-based public safety decisions. Throughout my tenure, the Commission has operated in a collaborative manner to improve product safety in this country. During my Chairmanship nearly every vote on safety standards, recalls, and civil penalties was bipartisan. Upon my resignation as Chair, I was gratified that

both sitting Republican Commissioners praised my management of the agency and said that the CPSC had been strengthened under my tenure.

The illegal attempt to remove me from the CPSC happened immediately after my colleagues and I took steps to advance our safety work and protect our staff from arbitrary firings. President Trump's action politicizes a critical independent public safety agency that was structured by law to avoid such interference.

At issue is vital safety work such as the proposed safety rule advanced last week aimed at preventing the importation of poorly made lithium-ion batteries that have been responsible for deadly e-bike and e-scooter fires across the country. Both Republican Commissioners voted against moving the proposed rule forward citing a Presidential Executive Order that contradicts our statutory obligations and serves only to delay safety standards. Such delays can and have cost lives. Just over a month ago, an e-bike fire killed a 6-year-old girl, her aunt and her grandmother. That was only one of hundreds of fires identified by the CPSC in recent years. As an independent agency, we can and should stop these tragedies by requiring lithium-ion batteries to be built to common sense standards.

CPSC Commissioners also are tasked with deciding how to best use appropriated funds to meet the agency's safety mission. The President, by law, is restricted from interfering with the appointment of CPSC employees other than Commissioners. Accordingly, in a letter to the Acting Chairman last week, my colleagues and I opposed any firing of CPSC staff in order to meet an arbitrary quota set by the White House as well as the political reclassification of over 70 CPSC employees. The Administration, however, continues to demand more heads.

No terminations are necessary. The funding recently approved by Congress and the President is sufficient to maintain our current staffing levels and to fill critical vacancies. The agency is operating with approximately 30 employees fewer than our funding levels allow. A recent hearing demonstrated that our staff are stretched thin and, at their current numbers, are unable to meet the safety goals set by the Commission. Instead of filling these gaps, the Administration is targeting for elimination individuals who counsel small businesses and other manufacturers on how to make safer products and educate consumers on how to prevent infant deaths and injuries in their own homes. Terminating these employees will inevitably result in emergency room visits or deaths that could and should have been avoided.

The actions against me and my colleagues also cannot be taken in isolation. They are part of the Trump Administration's ongoing attack on federal agencies and federal workers to the detriment of the American public. Workers whose job it is to prevent food poisoning; fight consumer scams and fraud; ensure the safety of workplaces; provide healthcare to veterans; ensure Americans have clean water; preserve the environment for our children; and provide food and shelter to those in need following natural disasters are losing their jobs haphazardly. Although done in the name of "efficiency," these cuts have simply created chaos. By crippling core government functions, the Administration is making communities throughout this great nation less safe and life harder.

To the federal workers at the CPSC and other government agencies who are affected by the current Administration's practices, these times are difficult and may be hard to endure, but your work matters. It matters to your neighbors, it matters to the nation, and it matters to your children and future generations. Know that you are seen and appreciated by others, including me.

It is an honor and privilege to work at the CPSC beside so many dedicated individuals. When I first started in the government, I swore an oath to support the Constitution and to protect the United States from enemies both foreign and domestic. I will continue to do so and urge others to do the same.