

Dear Senator Durbin,

I note with interest your request for Presidential commutation of the sentence on George Ryan, a convicted felon formerly Governor of the State of Illinois. You have been quoted by WGN News as follows:

"His family name has been damaged," Durbin said. "He has, at an advanced moment of his life, been removed from his family. He has lost the economic security which most people count on at his age. And he is separate from his wife at a time when she is in frail health. To say that he has paid a price for his wrongdoing, he certainly has. And the question is whether continued imprisonment is appropriate at this point."

I admire your bravery in standing up what you believe in. As you note, he has paid a (high) price for his wrongdoing. Implicit in your words is an acknowledgement of his significant contributions to the State as Governor, notably his famous stance against the death penalty. Notably, the dishonor he brought to our State, like the sitting Governor, is a burden everyone in Illinois will have to bear for years to come. Nonetheless, I respect that you have the integrity to do what you think is the "right thing".

My question is why is your commendably charitable outlook restricted to Governor Ryan? I understand your reasoning that he has learned his lesson - but what about others in society that learned their lessons, too? Sadly, you seem unable to make this distinction when advocating a "scorched Earth" approach to toy safety. I am Chairman of a Vernon Hills-based educational toys and educational materials company group and am now subject to the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008. You have supported this bill from the beginning, and in my experience, have had no interest in discussing it with your own constituents like our companies or our employees. [I can provide details upon request.] I believe you have decided that all toy companies are somehow "bad" or untrustworthy and implicitly that we, as an Illinois children's product company, need to be severely restricted to prevent harm to consumers.

Apparently, the extremely high price paid by individual toy companies for their own transgressions in 2007, plus the national crisis in confidence inflicted on the many other affected children's products companies (notwithstanding their own records of safety), does not merit the same "learned their lesson" consideration as the worthy George Ryan whose crimes are linked with the notorious death of the six Willis children in 1994. I wish I understood what it is about Governor Ryan that makes you so sure he has learned his lesson - or why you are equally sure no one in our industry have learned theirs. Not to worry - with the CPSIA as the law of the land, you have had a personal hand in making sure there will never be any Presidential commutations possible for our company, our employees or our consumers.

Sincerely,

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