

Press Release

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Legislation Weakening Pool Safety Vetoed by Governor Crist

Rep. Wasserman Schultz Applauds Move to Protect Children from Drowning

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(Washington, DC) -- Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz applauded Governor Charlie Crist's veto of HB 679. Had it not been vetoed, the legislation would have dramatically weakened Florida's pool safety legislation, eliminating Department of Health pool inspections for homeowner's associations comprised of 32 or fewer units.

"I applaud Governor Crist's actions to protect children from accidental drowning," said Rep. Wasserman Schultz. "Childhood drowning is the leading cause of death for children fourteen and under in Florida. Through this veto, Governor Crist is sending a strong signal that Florida will continue to lead the way in the fight to save children from drowning."

The Governor's veto was met with wide ranging support from advocacy groups that seek to strengthen, not weaken, child safety measures.

"Governor Crist's wise decision to veto HB 679 helps ensure safe swimming pools that improve people's health and lives," said Thomas M Lachocki, Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer, National Swimming Pool Foundation. "This veto helps prevent drowning and disease and maintains Florida's high swimming pool safety standards."

"The Florida Swimming Pool Association would like to thank Governor Crist for vetoing HB 679, acknowledging the health and safety concerns that would have existed if homeowner association pools and spas in this

state were exempt from Department of Health regulation,” said Jennifer Hatfield, Director of Government & Public Affairs, Florida Swimming Pool Association. “Further, this bill would have been in direct contrast to the vast progress made by the federal Virginia Graeme Baker Pool & Spa Safety Act.”

Late last year, Congress passed, and the President signed, The Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act to combat drowning, the second leading cause of accidental death for children ages one to fourteen years old nationwide. The legislation, introduced by Rep. Wasserman Schultz, provides incentive grants to states that pass legislation implementing layers of protection to help prevent childhood drowning and establishes an educational outreach program to alert people to the potential dangers posed to children by pools and spas. It also requires that swimming pools be equipped with safety drain covers to prevent suction drain entrapment.

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