

Testimony of Kevin Riggins

October 8, 2002

My name is Kevin Riggins and this is my wife Debbie. The young man in the pictures is our son Sean. On Monday September 2, 2002, Sean complained of an upset stomach, headache and general discomfort. He was to have played in a football game that night, but he sat out due to illness. The following morning my wife took Sean to the doctor's office where Sean was diagnosed with bronchitis. He was given Medication and sent home. That afternoon, Sean began to convulse, and then he stopped breathing. My wife called 911, and proceeded to administer CPR. When the ambulance arrived she called me at work at which time I left and drove 40 miles to the hospital. By the time I arrived my son was gone.

Sean Michael Riggins was born on March 24, 1986 at Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota where I was stationed. From the beginning Sean was an active child, always on the move, never wanting to sit still or take naps. He learned to ice skate at an early age and eventually tried his hand at hockey. Later Sean discovered the martial arts, Tae Kwon Do in particular, where he achieved the rank of Red/Black Belt. Sean has a shelf full of martial arts tournament trophies and was once mentioned in the Tae Kwon Do Times magazine. Later as he got older school sports dominated his time. Wrestling and football were his two greatest passions and he excelled at both sports. In the summer time, his days were usually spent fishing and swimming at the creek, riding his bike and chasing girls. When he got his driver's license he took a part-time job at a restaurant to pay for gas and insurance, and still chased the girls. Sean also liked to go to the YMCA and box, and lift weights. Our son was a very physical person when it came to work and play.

Sean was a very healthy young man as well. There were no heart related problems. Prior to football he had been given a physical and given a clean bill of health. When the coroner told us that Sean had died of a heart attack, it did not seem possible. 16 year old children in good physical health don't just up and die of a heart attack. That was when we found out about ephedrine.

Evidently Sean had been taking a supposed supplement called "Yellow Jackets" to help enhance his performance. He had taken it on Monday for sure, and as we were to find out later, he had taken it more than just the one time. Through our investigation, we have found that Sean's use of ephedrine started during wrestling season last year. The Wrestlers would take one or two of these capsules before a meet to "give them an edge." During football it was taken during hell week (double practices), before games and before big practices when starting positions were being decided. They also started to take these products during sleepovers in order to stay awake. These kids were able to go into a gas station and buy these products right off the shelf. Also about a week after Sean died, the coaches found an empty bottle of Yellow Jackets on the locker room floor. Quite likely someone did not learn a lesson from the death of a teammate. We have found the use of Ephedrine to be altogether too widespread among the young people today.

Most of the kids today don't realize the danger of these so called supplements. Kids tend to think they are invincible; "that can't happen to me, those things happen to other people." This is the mindset not only of teenagers but of college age students as well. They are taking these products to stay awake for late night partying and cramming for exams. This I found out from one of my supervisors at work. His son told him about ephedrine usage in college. My Son did not take illegal drugs, he did not smoke pot or cigarettes, in fact, when he found out a couple of his friends were doing some of those things he would get after them to quit. These kids have no idea that these products have a very deadly effect.

What I would like to see happen is for these products to be regulated so that a 16--year-old boy or girl cannot go into a gas station or convenient store and purchase them. If these companies have a problem with restricting access to these products so we don't have to bury another child, then they are irresponsible and don't deserve to be in business. We hear an awful lot about homeland security these days, and as a patriot and a veteran, I completely agree with the need to beef it up. But we are charged to protect this nation from all enemies foreign and domestic, and companies that endanger the lives of our young people should be considered enemies and dealt with accordingly. Our kids are our greatest assets and if we have a chance to protect them then I say we do it no matter the cost, because no parent should have to go through this agony, no school children should have to file past their friend lying in a box with hands folded, knowing this is the last

image they will have of that person. If I have anything at all to say about it, it won't happen again. Help us make this problem go away, regulate these products so children cannot gain access to them. Thank you.

Testimony of Mrs. Debbie Riggins

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Thank you Mr. Chairman for allowing me to testify here today. There are so many still unanswered question for us. It is so hard to come to grips with the death of our son. In what way do these companies differ from drug peddlers? Contract killers? They are making a product; packaging it; wholesaling it; distributing it; having others sell it for them so you don't see their faces; so the common man doesn't know where to go if he has a question or needs help. The only difference that I see is how the law is written or rather no law is in place.

We know that cleaning products are poisonous and can cause physical injury if a child were to get hold of it. It has warning labels. Anyone can buy it. If you give it to a minor who doesn't know any better, chances are good that it will be used in a manner not intended by the manufacturer. Since we know this is a possibility, they've put special caps on them so that the kids can't open them. It's the same with other over the counter medications.

We know that children don't always make the best decisions and so we shield them from some things. We don't allow them to buy cigarettes. We don't allow them to drink alcohol. But this product can be really dangerous.

This product is just one step away from being dispensed from a candy machine next to the Lyons Club Mints. It comes in its snazzy package looking like colorful candy. It isn't expensive, so children can buy it with their pocket-money.

We need to take action to see that children can't access such deadly candy.