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News Release

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OPTICIANS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA ANNOUNCES OPPOSITION TO THE CONTACT LENS CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT OF 2006

The Opticians Association of America (OAA) today announced that it would actively oppose legislation now pending before Congress [S. 2480, H.R.5762] that seeks to drastically alter existing relationships between eye care practitioners (“ECPs”), consumers, and contact lens manufacturers.

In a electronic mail message to the organization’s membership Mark F. Cloer, President of OAA, stated: “The so-called ‘Contact Lens Consumer Protection Act of 2006’ will have a profound effect on what historically as been a cornerstone of best practice eye care, namely the reliance of contact lens consumers upon their eye care practitioners -- ophthalmologists, optometrists and opticians – to provide the best service and highest quality lenses available, at a fair price. By requiring that a contact lens manufacturer sell in a “nondiscriminatory manner” all its products to all distributors, the bill would effectively limit that manufacturer’s ability to conduct its business as it saw fit. For example, the bill’s vague and ambiguous language might curtail a manufacturer’s ability to withhold its products from unethical or inefficient ECPs or to provide volume

discounts and special promotional offers that ECPs pass along to patients and customers. The end result is likely to be higher prices and uncertain levels of quality and service from ECPs who no longer need to conform to a manufacturer's own standards.

Mr. Cloer encouraged all OAA members to immediately contact their U.S. Representative and two U.S. Senators urging the defeat of the bill. He concluded by observing: "To label this legislation as 'Consumer Protection' is just another example of 'Inside the Beltway' double talk that makes a mockery of the English language. Government interference on behalf of special interests promises to disrupt the existing system of contact lens distribution that, according to a 2005 study by the Federal Trade Commission, currently allows consumers 'a wider-than-ever choice of channels through which to purchase their replacement contact lenses.' Congress should heed the time honored advice that 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it.'"

The OAA was founded in 1926 as the Guild of Prescription Opticians of America, and later reorganized as the Opticians Association of America. As the national trade association of opticians, OAA is committed to promoting opticianry as an integral part of the nation's health care system through professional education opportunities, legislative representation and communication, and public awareness.

For more information, please visit www.oaa.org.

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