

# Denver's Zen Magnets relishes the positives and negatives of fighting the Federal Government.

*Denver's Zen Magnets Is Fighting the Federal Government Over Its Ban of Tiny Magnet Balls*

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[Last month](#), [Shihan Qu] sat in his rented Denver office to watch the CPSC make a decision that would have big consequences for [Zen Magnets](#), the company he founded five years ago. The meeting was taking place 1,600 miles away in a staid boardroom in Bethesda, Maryland, and being live-streamed online for anyone who wanted to watch it. Qu did.

The problem, as the CPSC saw it, was that children were getting a hold of the magnets and swallowing them, causing devastating bowel injuries when the magnets attracted inside of their digestive tracts. One nineteen-month-old girl died last year after swallowing seven magnets that her brothers brought home. Though the magnets are usually sold in sets of 216 and labeled as not suitable for young kids, the CPSC had for years gotten reports that magnets were becoming separated from the sets and ending up in the hands of children.

The CPSC meeting had one item on the agenda: whether to ban small, spherical, high-powered magnets. Foremost in most of the commissioners' minds were the injury statistics and the reports from doctors about how these wounds are hard to detect and serious to treat. But the chairman of the commission, Elliot Kaye, acknowledged that a ban on

magnets would have another effect, too. When he spoke about it, he looked directly into the camera that was recording and streaming the meeting, as if he knew Qu would be watching.



Shihan Qu - Oct 9 Denver Westword Cover



Elliot Kaye - CPSC Chairman

Kaye quoted from Qu's e-mail, reading aloud a passage about how Qu decided to start Zen Magnets in "a moment of awe and lucidity." Qu wrote that he considers the five-millimeter magnet spheres to be "an adventure into geometry, photography, physical forces and, most importantly, my own mind" and that they "still bring me the childhood wonder that I once had." The fact that they require users to be careful, Kaye quoted Qu as writing, "doesn't mean magnets should be feared but that they should be respected."

"We do not agree on how to address the hazards presented by these magnets," Kaye said, looking into the camera. "But please know I do respect your dream to innovate and to create.... I hope your dreaming will continue and that inspiration will strike again."

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Brief except shown. Full article available here:

[http://blogs.westword.com/latestword/2014/10/zen\\_magnets\\_fighting\\_federal\\_government\\_over\\_ban.php](http://blogs.westword.com/latestword/2014/10/zen_magnets_fighting_federal_government_over_ban.php)

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