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(54) FURNACE DOOR LATCH ASSEMBLY

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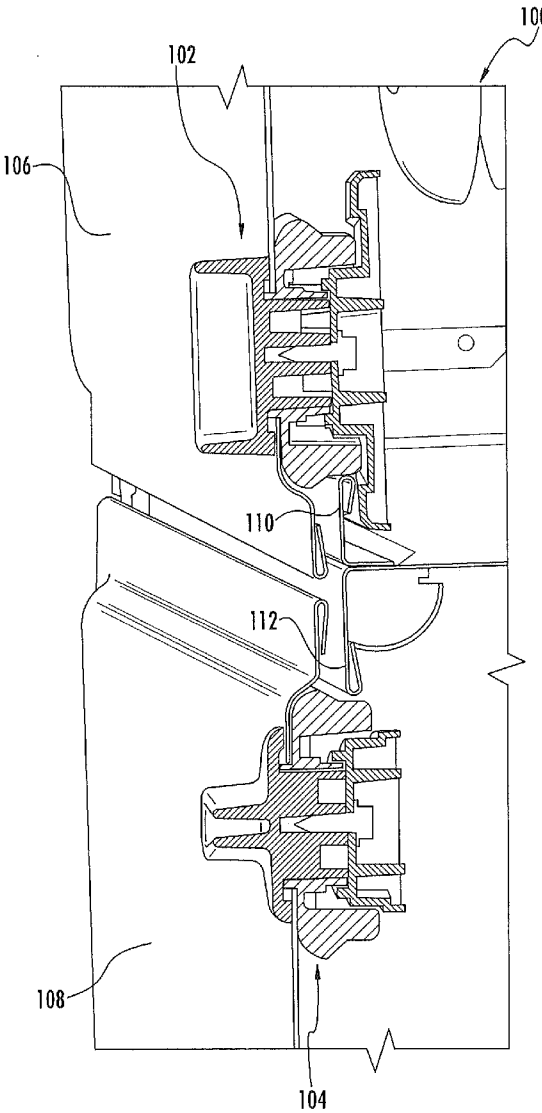
CPC *E05B 3/04* (2013.01)
USPC **292/336.3**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A latch assembly for securing a furnace door to a furnace casing includes a latch for placement on an inside of the furnace door; a knob for placement on a front surface of the furnace door; a latch plate for placement between the latch and the knob; and a threaded screw for threadably coupling the knob to the latch. The latch plate supports the weight of the furnace door in a closed position and reduces a pinch force used for rotating the knob.



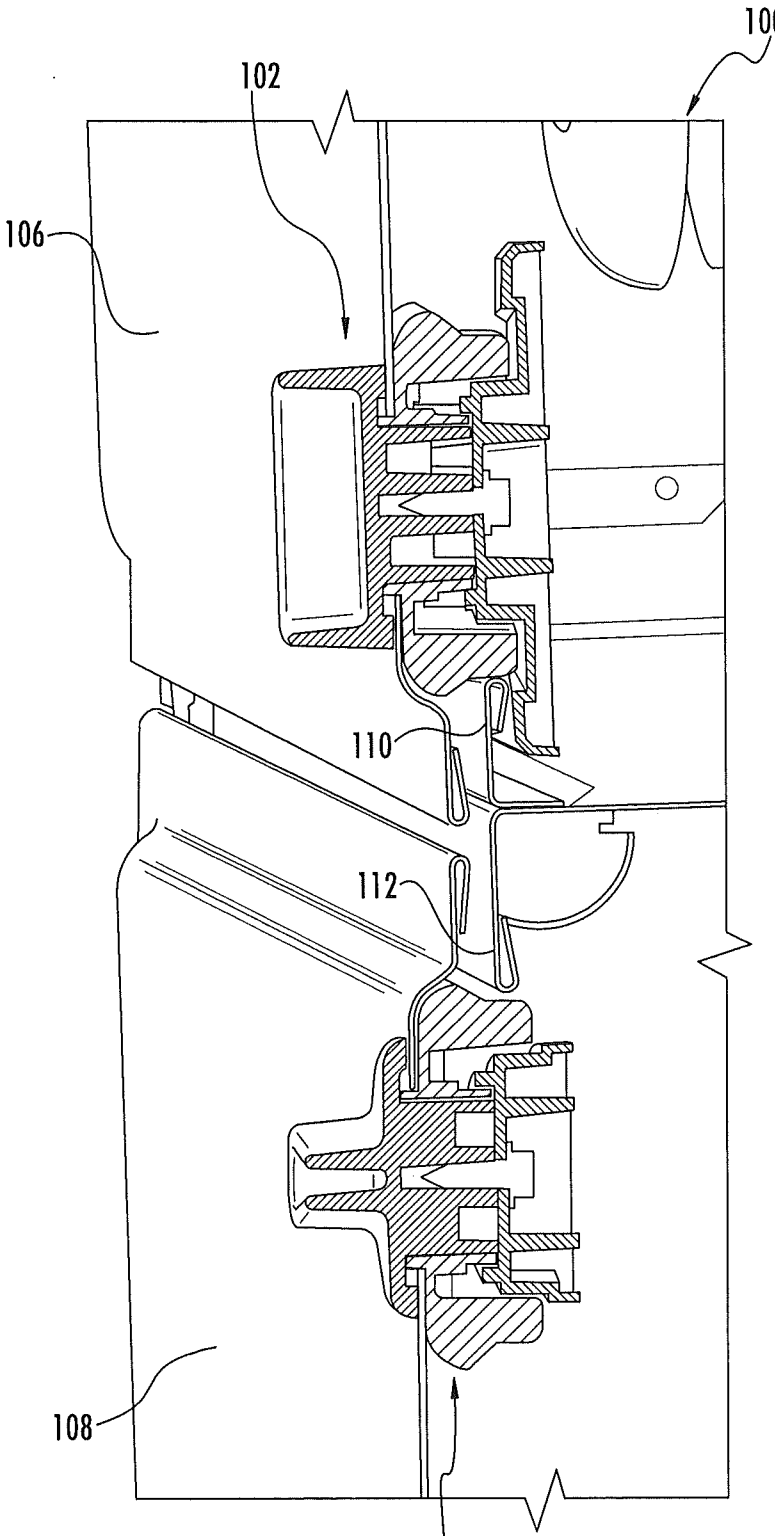


FIG. 1

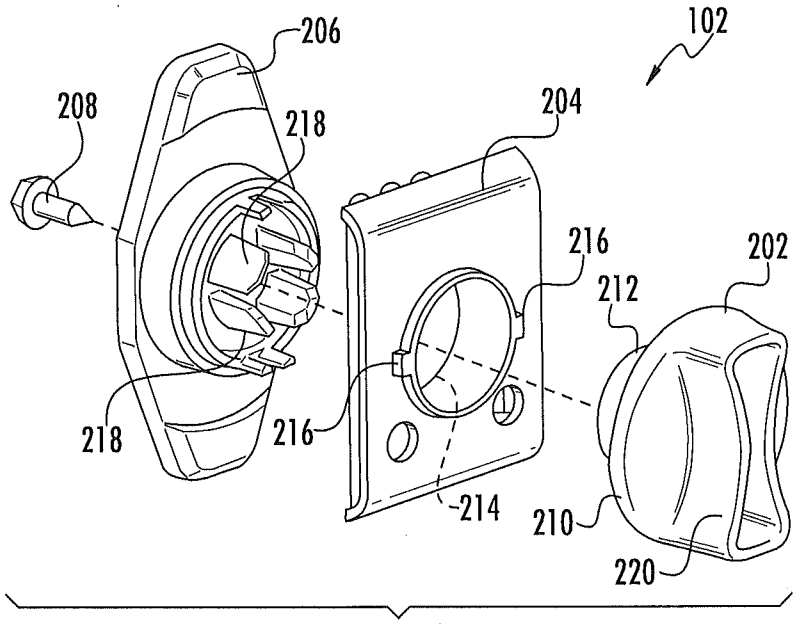


FIG. 2

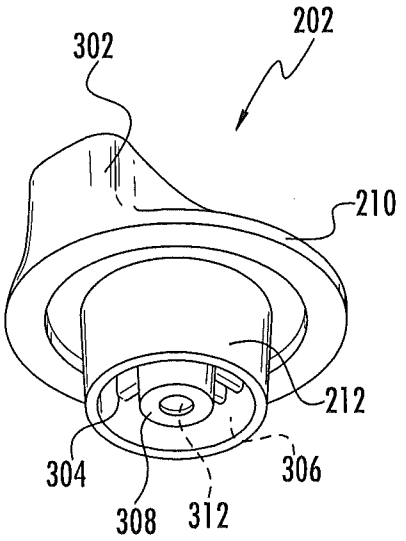


FIG. 3A

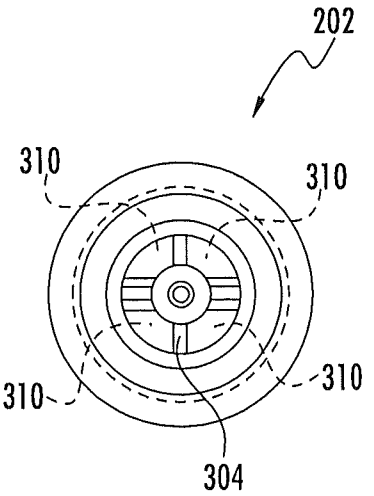


FIG. 3B

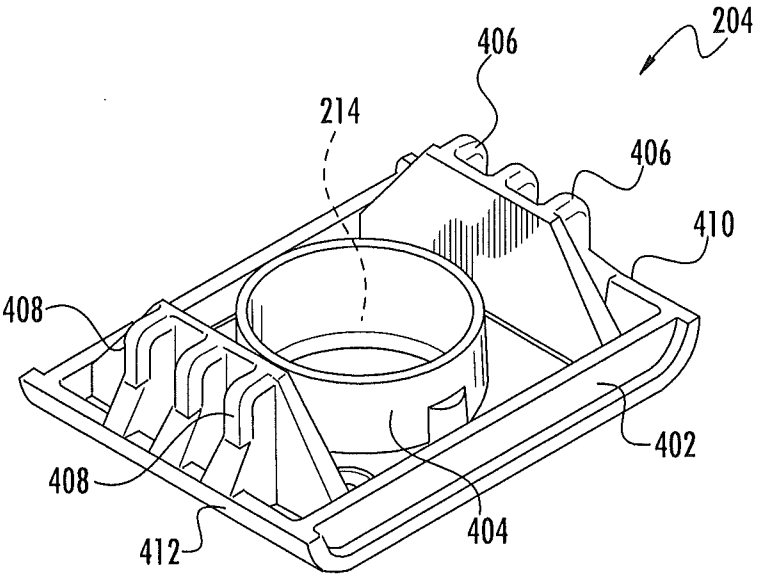

204
406
214
406
410
408
402
408
404
412

FIG. 4A

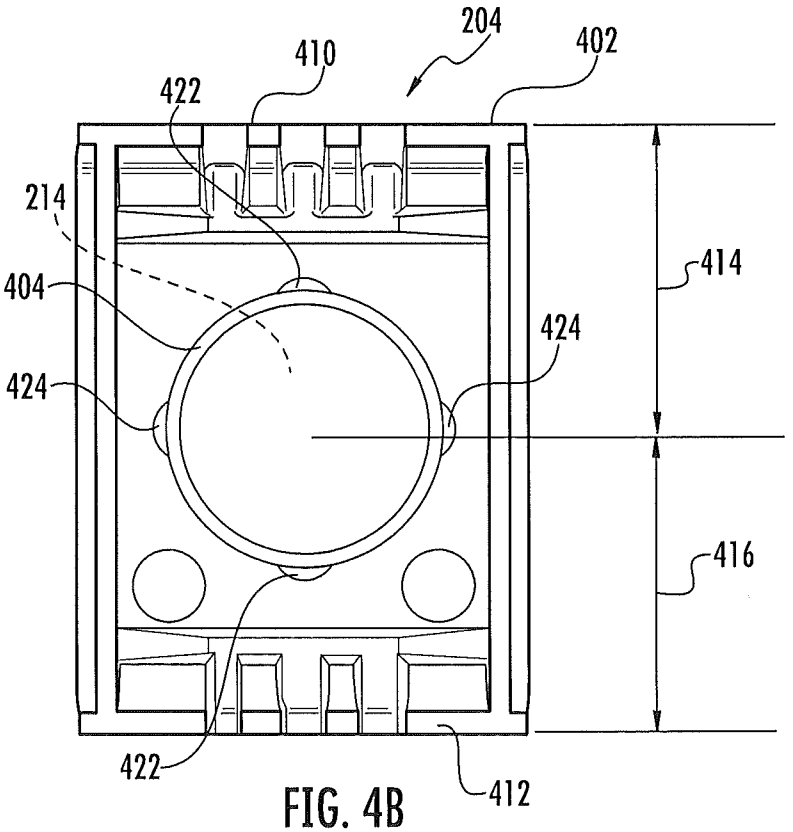

204
410
402
422
214
414
404
424
424
416
422
412

FIG. 4B

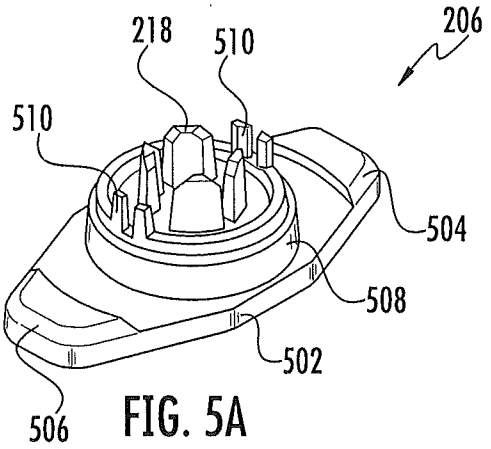


FIG. 5A

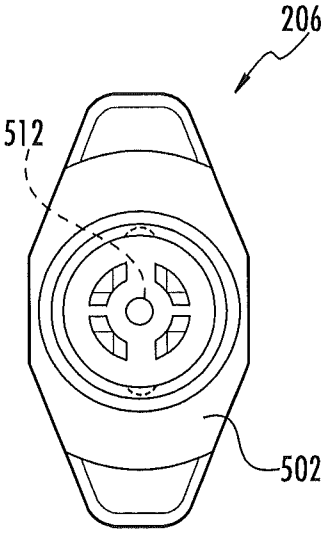


FIG. 5B

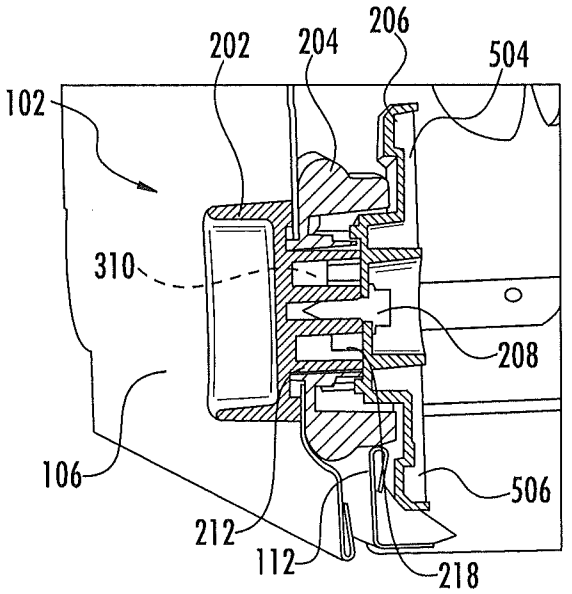


FIG. 6

FURNACE DOOR LATCH ASSEMBLY

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. provisional patent application Ser. No. 61/613,615 filed Mar. 21, 2012, the entire contents of which are incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF INVENTION

[0002] This invention relates generally to furnaces and, more particularly, to a furnace door latch assembly that is ergonomically designed.

DESCRIPTION OF RELATED ART

[0003] Furnaces often include doors to provide access to internal components. Door latches are used to secure the door to the furnace cabinet, and allow for the door to be opened. Typically, a door latch includes a two piece door knob and latch to secure the door. However, this latch requires a greater amount of turning or pinch force to rotate the knob and unlock the door. Improvements in a door latch assembly for a furnace door would be well received in the art.

BRIEF SUMMARY

[0004] According to an aspect of the invention, a latch assembly that secures a furnace door to a furnace casing includes a latch for placement on an inside of the furnace door; a knob operable for placement on a front surface of the furnace door; a latch plate for placement between the latch and the knob; and a threaded screw for threadably coupling the knob to the latch. The knob includes a knob body having a cylindrical portion and an arcuate portion that is directly opposed. Also, the latch plate supports the weight of the furnace door in a closed position and reduces a pinch force used for rotating the knob.

[0005] Other aspects, features, and techniques of the invention will become more apparent from the following description taken in conjunction with the drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0006] Referring now to the drawings wherein like elements are numbered alike in the FIGURES:

[0007] FIG. **1** depicts a perspective cross-sectional view of latch assemblies mounted on furnace doors according to an exemplary embodiment of the invention;

[0008] FIG. **2** depicts an exploded perspective view of a latch assembly according to an exemplary embodiment of the invention;

[0009] FIG. **3**A depicts a perspective view of a knob according to an exemplary embodiment of the invention;

[0010] FIG. **3**B depicts a bottom elevation view of the knob shown in FIG. **3**A according to an exemplary embodiment of the invention;

[0011] FIG. **4**A depicts a perspective view of a latch plate according to an exemplary embodiment of the invention;

[0012] FIG. **4**B depicts a bottom elevation view of the latch plate shown in FIG. **4**A according to an exemplary embodiment of the invention;

[0013] FIG. **5**A depicts a perspective view of a latch according to an exemplary embodiment of the invention;

[0014] FIG. **5**B depicts a front elevation view of the latch shown in FIG. **5**A according to an exemplary embodiment of the invention; and

[0015] FIG. **6** depicts a perspective cross-sectional view of a latch assembly according to an exemplary embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0016] An embodiment of a latch assembly for a door of a furnace includes a latch plate coupled to a latch, a knob and a threaded screw. The latch plate is coupled to the door and is located inside the furnace. In an embodiment, the latch plate includes tabs that support the weight of the door when the latch assembly is in a latched position. Also, the latch includes a plurality of tabs that are coupled to corresponding grooves in the knob. A screw threadably couples the knob to the latch and creates a seal between the latch plate and the furnace door as it securely holds the assembled latch, latch plate and knob together.

[0017] Referring now to the drawings, FIG. **1** depicts a partial perspective view of a furnace **100** including latch assemblies **102** and **104** according to an exemplary embodiment of the invention. Particularly, furnace **100** is shown with latch assemblies **102**, **104** that may be selectively coupled to respective furnace doors **106**, **108** for securing the furnace doors **106**, **108**. The furnace doors **106**, **108** provide access to compartments in furnace **100**. In one non-limiting embodiment, furnace **100** is shown with two latch assemblies **102**, **104**, but additional latch assemblies that are substantially similar may be used without departing from the scope of the invention. In an exemplary embodiment, two furnace doors **106**, **108** may be used, one to access the upper compartment (or burner compartment) and one to access a lower compartment (or blower compartment). The upper compartment houses a heat exchanger (not shown) while the lower compartment houses a controller and a blower (not shown). Also, latch assemblies **102**, **104** may be selectively rotated clockwise or counter-clockwise in order to secure doors **106**, **108** to respective furnace casings **110**, **112**. Specifically, each latch assembly **102**, **104** may be continuously rotated every 90 degrees (i.e., perform a complete rotation in either the clockwise or counter-clockwise direction) in order to latch or unlatch doors **106**, **108**. In another example, the latch assemblies **102**, **104** may be rotated by 90 degrees in either direction in order to latch or unlatch the doors **106**, **108**. Each latch assembly **102**, **104** includes a pair of equally spaced fingers (FIG. **5**) that allows the latch assemblies **102**, **104** to stay in its rotated position after every 90 degrees of rotation until the next rotation of latch assembly **102**, **104**. Also, latch assemblies **102**, **104** include a latch plate (shown in FIG. **2**) that allows the latch assemblies **102**, **104** to be used in multiple orientations (e.g., top of door and bottom of door) so that only one latch design is needed and doors can be moved from a top location to a bottom location by reorienting the latch assemblies **102**, **104**. It is to be appreciated that the latch assemblies **102**, **104** are substantially similar, and a description of latch assembly **102** described herein provides an adequate description of latch assembly **104**.

[0018] FIG. **2** depicts an exploded perspective view of latch assembly **102** according to an exemplary embodiment of the invention. Particularly, latch assembly **102** includes a knob **202**, latch plate **204**, latch **206** and screw **208** that may be selectively coupled to each other. In one embodiment, the knob **202**, latch plate **204**, and latch **206** may be made from a

polycarbonate material, but other similar types of materials may be used in other embodiments. The knob **202** has a generally circular or "disc-shaped" body portion **210** with a generally cylindrical portion **212** at a first end and an "hour-glass" shaped arcuate portion **220** at a directly opposed second end. The cylindrical portion **212** may be slidably coupled to latch plate **204** in latch assembly **102**. Also, the arcuate portion **220** serves as a finger grip for a user to rotate knob **202** in order to latch or unlatch the latch assembly **102**, as is shown and described herein. Further, the latch plate **204** is generally rectangular in shape and includes a plurality of protrusions **216** that are diametrically opposed along a horizontal axis around the circumference of aperture **214**. The plurality of protrusions **216** may engage corresponding grooves or slots in furnace door **106** (FIG. **1**) to position the latch plate **204** on door **106** (FIG. **1**) in a vertical direction. Also, the protrusions **216** cooperate with corresponding grooves or slots in furnace door **106** and prevent the latch plate **204** from rotating when knob **202** is rotated during latching or unlatching of latch assembly **102**. Further, latch **206** has a plurality of substantially similar arcuate tabs **218** that frictionally snap or engage grooves **310** (FIG. **3**A-**3**B). The arcuate tabs **218** facilitate rotation of the latch **206** when the knob **202** is rotated, as is shown and described herein. Further, a threaded screw **208** is provided to threadably couple the latch **206** to knob **202** and hold the latch assembly **102** together. The orientation of arcuate portion **220** provides a visual cue into whether the latch assembly **102** is in latched or unlatched. In a latched position, the arcuate portion **220** is rotated and oriented vertically (as is shown in FIG. **2**), which causes the latch **206** to be vertically oriented (i.e., the longitudinal axis of latch **206** is oriented vertically). In an unlatched position, the arcuate portion **220** is oriented horizontally, which causes the latch **206** to be similarly horizontally oriented (i.e., the longitudinal axis of latch **206** is oriented horizontally).

[0019] FIGS. **3**A-**3**B depict a view of knob **202** including the cylindrical portion **212** according to an exemplary embodiment of the invention. As shown in FIG. **3**A, knob **202** has a generally cylindrical "disc-shaped" body portion **210** with a generally arcuate portion **302** at a first end and a generally cylindrical portion **212** at a diametrically opposed second end. The cylindrical portion **212** is located transversely to the body portion **210** and includes partitions **304**, which are recessed within an interior cavity **306** of cylindrical portion **212**. The interior cavity **306** is substantially coextensive with a longitudinal length of cylindrical portion **212**. In an embodiment, as shown in FIG. **3**B, partitions **304** separate the interior cavity **306** (FIG. **3**A) into a plurality of spaced grooves **310** that are substantially similar. As particularly shown in FIG. **3**B, four grooves **310** are provided in interior cavity **306** (FIG. **3**A) for receiving the tabs **218** (FIG. **2**). The tabs **218** (FIG. **2**) frictionally engage the grooves **310** when knob **202** is coupled to latch **206** (FIG. **2**). But, in another embodiment, additional grooves that are substantially similar to groove **310** may be provided to receive additional tabs that are substantially similar to tabs **218** in latch **206** (FIG. **2**). Referring back to FIG. **3**A, interior cavity **306** includes a threaded portion **308** that is substantially coextensive with the cavity **306**. Also, threaded portion **308**, which includes a cavity **312**, which is threaded on an internal surface for receiving complementary threads of screw **208** (FIG. **2**). In an embodiment, portion **308** may be initially provided with a smooth blind cavity **312** of a sufficient diameter for receiving screw **208**. The screw **208** forms threads on an interior surface of the cavity **312** as the screw **208** is threadably inserted into the cavity **312** during initial assembly of the latch assembly **102** (FIG. **2**). In another embodiment, the cavity **312** may be threaded during manufacture without having the screw **308** form the threads on the interior surface of the cavity **312**.

[0020] FIGS. **4**A-**4**B depict a view of latch plate **204** according to an embodiment of the invention. As shown in FIG. **4**A, latch plate **204** has a generally rectangular shaped body **402** from first end **410** to second end **412**. Body **402** has a generally cylindrical portion **404** that extends orthogonally from a longitudinal axis of body **402**. Also, cylindrical portion **404** has a bore or opening **214** therethrough for receiving cylindrical portion **212** (FIGS. **2**-**3**) of knob **202** (FIG. **2**). The cylindrical portion **212** of knob **202** (FIG. **3**A) rotates within the bore **214** when the assembled latch assembly **102** (FIG. **1**) is rotated during latching or unlatching. This rotation within bore **214** prevents the cylindrical portion **212** from direct contact with an edge of either furnace door **106**, **108** and possible wear when knob **202** (FIG. **3**A) is rotated. A plurality of spaced ribs **406** and **408** are provided at first end **410** and second end **412**, respectively. In one non-limiting example, the latch plate **204** may be installed in door **106** (FIG. **1**) with end **410** positioned above end **412** with the door **106** (FIG. **1**) in a closed position. In this configuration, the ribs **408** rest on an edge of casing **110** or **112** (FIG. **1**) and support the weight of the furnace door **106** (FIG. **1**). This reduces the turning or pinching force needed to rotate knob **202** clockwise or counter-clockwise during latching or unlatching latch assembly **102**. In another embodiment, the latch plate **204** may be installed with end **412** positioned above end **410** without departing from the scope of the invention.

[0021] In an embodiment, as shown in FIG. **4**B, latch plate **204** has a plurality of semi-spherical protrusions **422**, **424** that are equally spaced around the circumference of cylindrical portion **404**. In the example shown, the protrusions **422** are vertically oriented around the circumference of aperture **214** while protrusions **424** are horizontally oriented around the circumference of bore or aperture **214**. The protrusions **422**, **424** engage or abut tabs **510** (FIG. **5**A) for every 90 degrees of rotation of latch **206** (FIG. **2**) as is shown and described in reference to FIG. **5**A. Also, aperture **214** is offset from first end **410** and second end **412** in order to accommodate varying tolerances during manufacturing (i.e., aperture **214** is offset from a center point of the body **402**). Particularly, the center of aperture **214** is at a height **414** from end **410** and at a height **416** from end **412**. Height **414** varies from height **416** and may be adjusted accordingly to accommodate varying manufacturing tolerances.

[0022] FIGS. **5**A-**5**B depict a view of latch **206** including a pair of spaced tabs **218** according to an exemplary embodiment of the invention. As shown in FIG. **5**A, latch **206** has a generally oval shaped body **502** and includes a first latch portion **504** and a diametrically opposed second latch portion **506**. In one non-limiting example with reference to door **106**, when the latch **206** is in a first orientation (i.e., latch portions **504**, **506** aligned horizontally), door **106** (FIG. **1**) can be mounted against casing **110** (FIG. **1**) as latch body **502** and latch portions **504**, **506** clear the opening in casing **110** (FIG. **1**) and allow door **106** to be opened in this orientation (i.e., latch assembly **102** is unlatched). In another example, when the latch **206** is in a second orientation (i.e., latch portions **504**, **506** are aligned vertically), door **106** can be mounted against casing **110** (FIG. **1**) and latch portions **504**, **506** engage the inside surface of casing **100** (FIG. **1**), and prevents

the latch **206** from clearing an edge of the casing, thereby latching the door **106** to the casing **110** (FIG. **1**).

[0023] Also, body **502** has a generally cylindrical portion **508** that is orthogonal to the longitudinal axis of the body **502**. The cylindrical portion **508** has a pair of spaced tabs **510** that are diametrically opposed to each other around a circumference of portion **508**. Additionally, cylindrical portion **508** includes a plurality of arcuate tabs **218**, which are substantially similar, within an interior of the portion **508**. The tabs **218** are received in grooves **310** (FIG. **3**B) and cause a rotation in latch **206** as knob **202** (FIG. **2**) is rotated. Also, as shown in FIG. **5**B, latch **206** includes an aperture **512** that traverses body **502**. The aperture **508** has a diameter that is slightly larger than a width of the body of screw **208** but smaller than the head of screw **208**.

[0024] In operation and with reference to FIG. **6**, latch plate **204** may be coupled to an inside surface of door **106** by aligning aperture **214** (FIG. **2**) with a complementary sized opening in door **106** so that protrusions **216** (FIG. **2**) of latch plate **204** are received within complementary shaped grooves in door **106**. Cylindrical portion **212** is mounted to door **106** and is coupled to latch plate **206** by passing cylindrical portion **212** from the outside of door **106** through the aperture **214** (FIG. **2**). Also, knob **202** is coupled to latch **206** and receives the arcuate tabs **218** that engage grooves **310** within portion **212**. The screw **208** holds the assembly together and creates an airtight seal between the latch plate **204** and the inside surface of furnace door **106**. Also, ribs **408** (FIG. **4**A) ride (or rest) on an edge of casing **112** to support the weight of furnace door **106** and position the door **106** (FIG. **1**) in a vertical direction, thereby reducing the turning or pinching force needed to rotate knob **202** clockwise or counter-clockwise during latching or unlatching latch assembly **102**. As shown, when the latch **206** is in a first orientation (i.e., latch portions **504**, **506** are aligned vertically), door **106** can be mounted against casing **112** (and latch portions **504**, **506** engage the inside surface of casing **112** to latch the door **106** to the casing **112** and prevent the door **106** from being opened in this orientation. In another non-limiting example, the knob **202** may be rotated 90 degrees clockwise or counter-clockwise until tabs **510** (FIG. **5**A) engages protrusions **424** (FIG. **4**B) causing the latch portions **504**, **506** to correspondingly rotate 90 degrees. In this orientation, latch portions **504**, **506** clear the opening in casing **112** allowing door **106** to be opened (i.e., latch assembly **102** is unlatched).

[0025] The technical effects and benefits of embodiments relate to a latch assembly for a door of a furnace. The latch assembly includes a latch plate coupled to a latch, a knob and a threaded screw. The latch plate is coupled to the door and is located inside the furnace. The latch plate includes tabs that support the weight of the door when the latch assembly is in a latched position. Also, the latch includes a plurality of tabs that are coupled to corresponding grooves in the knob. A screw threadably couples the knob to the latch and creates a seal between the latch plate and the furnace door as it securely holds the assembled latch, latch plate and knob together.

[0026] The terminology used herein is for the purpose of describing particular embodiments only and is not intended to be limiting of the invention. While the description of the present invention has been presented for purposes of illustration and description, it is not intended to be exhaustive or limited to the invention in the form disclosed. Many modifications, variations, alterations, substitutions, or equivalent arrangement not hereto described will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention. Additionally, while the various embodiments of the invention have been described, it is to be understood that the aspects of the invention may include only some of the described embodiments. Accordingly, the invention is not to be seen as limited by the foregoing description, but is only limited by the scope of the appended claims.

1. A latch assembly for securing a furnace door to a furnace casing, comprising:
- a latch for placement on an inside of the furnace door;
- a knob operable for placement on a front surface of the furnace door;
- a latch plate for placement between the latch and the knob; and
- a threaded screw for threadably coupling the knob to the latch;
- wherein the latch plate supports the weight of the furnace door in a closed position and reduces a pinch force used for rotating the knob.

2. The latch assembly of claim **1**, wherein the knob includes a knob body having a cylindrical portion and an arcuate portion that is directly opposed.

3. The latch assembly of claim **1**, wherein the knob is coupled to the latch through a hole in the furnace door.

4. The latch assembly of claim **2**, wherein the latch plate comprises a latch plate body having a second cylindrical portion and at least one rib.

5. The latch assembly of claim **4**, wherein the second cylindrical portion comprises a bore that receives the cylindrical portion of the knob.

6. The latch assembly of claim **4**, wherein the at least one rib is operable to rest on an edge of the furnace casing and support the weight of the furnace door in the closed position.

7. The latch assembly of claim **5**, wherein the bore is offset from a center point of the latch plate body.

8. The latch assembly of claim **5**, wherein the latch plate comprises a plurality of protrusions located circumferentially around the bore.

9. The latch assembly of claim **1**, wherein the latch comprises a latch body, the latch body having a first latch portion, a diametrically opposed second latch portion, and a third cylindrical portion that is orthogonal to a longitudinal axis of the latch body.

10. The latch assembly of claim **9**, wherein at least one of the first or the second latch portions is operable to engage the furnace casing in a latched position of the latch assembly.

11. The latch assembly of claim **9**, wherein the third cylindrical portion includes at least one second tab that is operable to engage a protrusion on the latched plate in a latched position or an unlatched position.

12. The latch assembly of claim **1**, wherein the latch includes an aperture that receives a screw body of the threaded screw.

13. The latch assembly of claim **12**, wherein the knob includes a threaded portion that receives complementary threads of the screw body.

* * * * *