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Consumer Group Condemns Bogus “Hellhole” Report As Dishonest And Unfair

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New York – The Center for Justice & Democracy (CJ&D) called the American Tort Reform Association’s “Judicial Hellholes 2007” report, “dishonest and unfair with apparently no other point other than to undermine the independence of our judges and juries.” In its report released today, ATRA once again launched an unsubstantiated attack on fair and independent courts based primarily on a survey of its own members that includes some of America’s worst industries - tobacco, insurance, chemical, and pharmaceutical - that have a direct financial stake restricting lawsuits when they injure or kill someone. Also attacked are public officials who stand up to these industries in order to protect the consumers in their states.

“This report is complete nonsense filled with anecdotal stories and media quotes, perpetuating myths that ATRA itself creates,” said Joanne Doroshow, Executive Director for CJ&D. “What ATRA really seems to hate is our system of government where judges and juries cannot be wined, dined and bought-off by corporate lobbyists like them. So they try instead to issue bizarre reports like this, throwing jurisdictions in and out for their own political reasons, and attacking judges and juries who are doing their jobs on behalf of average hard-working Americans.”

The ATRA report and others like it have been severely attacked over the years by credible scholars. Just this year, two West Virginia University professors Richard Brisbin Jr. and John Kilwein published an article that notes, “business interest groups and the media produce stories about abusive litigation that neglect important contradictory information, rely on erroneous information, make assumptions based on inaccurate anecdotes, or use inadequate evidence and slogans generated by the ‘research’ arms of interest groups who neglect normal standards and practices of empirical social scientific inquiry.”

"We reject this report and applaud our judges for doing their jobs by protecting us from corporations that do not always have the best interest of the average person in mind," said Donna Harnett of Chicago (Cook County), IL - one of the so-called "hellholes." Donna's son, Martin, was injured at birth due to negligence, leaving him severely brain-damaged and requiring around the clock care. The ATRA report attacks the court in Donna's hometown, Chicago (Cook

County), that correctly struck down an unconstitutional cap on compensation for children like Martin.

Doroshow added, “With money and politics already dominating the executive and legislative branches, our court system is one of the only places left in America where injured citizens can successfully confront powerful industries and institutions and stop misconduct. The last thing we need are bogus attacks from groups like ATRA that threaten our courts.”

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