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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Consumer Advocates Condemn Senate Homeland Vote Placing Corporate Special Interests Above the Public's Interest**

The Center for Justice & Democracy (CJ&D) strongly condemned the Senate's 52-47 Homeland Security Bill vote today, rejecting an amendment that would have removed from the bill a number of corporate special interest provisions. These measures do nothing more than provide legal immunity to pharmaceutical giants and other corporations that cause death and injury to American citizens.

CJ&D Executive Director Joanne Doroshow said, "This bill appears to be the first shot of a radical pro-business, anti-consumer Congress, which is putting the corporate bottom line before the general good of the public. While similar to bailouts requested by a host of major industries that demonstrated their post-September 11 patriotism by asking to loot the federal treasury, this bill contains cruel provisions that take away the rights of children who have been harmed drug companies. These measures have nothing to do with terrorism or national security."

Consumer advocate Ralph Nader called the bill "another Bush attack on American democracy." Nader said, "This is President Bush's invitation to corporate recklessness by drug manufacturers who are now shielded from responsibility for damage they may inflict on injured Americans. Bush's bill opens the door to immunizing more corporations and their misdeeds from the rule of law that covers all other Americans."

Among the measures that pro-consumer Senators attempted to remove from the bill today are:

- A provision giving the Secretary of Homeland Security sweeping authority to virtually immunize from lawsuits makers of any products deemed “anti-terror technologies,” so determined under only the vaguest of standards. These so-called technologies need not be the subject of government contracts. They could be common products that end up on supermarket shelves.
- A provision secretly added last week that wipes out lawsuits brought by parents for damage caused by thimerosal, a mercury preservative in infant vaccines manufactured by Eli Lilly and others, that has been connected with autism. Neither the smallpox nor anthrax vaccines contain thimerosal, according to consumer groups. Lilly has been a major financial campaign contributor to Congress. *Congress Daily* recently reported on Lilly’s close ties to the White House and Rep. Henry Waxman, (D-Calif.) has asked for an explanation from the Office of Management and Budget about Lilly’s White House connections.
- Liability limits on airport-screening companies that were on duty on Sept. 11.

Said Doroshow, “Our legal system is the last line of defense against corporate abuse. If this bill is any sign of what’s to come over the next two years, the American public should be very concerned because their health and safety, and that of their children, are about to be trampled in the name of corporate profits.”

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