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NATIONAL CONSUMER GROUP BLASTS U.S. CHAMBER'S "REPORT" ON BUSINESS/LITIGATION CLIMATE

New York - The Center for Justice & Democracy today called the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's new annual state liability rankings, which criticizes certain state business climates based on nothing more than corporate lawyers' views of a state's legal system, "completely unwarranted, unfair, and contrary to the opinion of business leaders in the states."

Joanne Doroshow, CJ&D Executive Director, said, "The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has no business going around the country attacking individual states' business climates, at the same time these states are achieving great success attracting businesses," said Doroshow. "The U.S. Chamber should be promoting businesses in these states, not hurting them."

On March 8, 2005, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce released its fourth annual "survey" of corporate lawyers, including in-house counsel for major corporations, which presents their views of states' "litigation environment." To the extent that readers could decipher the details of this "survey," it seems clearly designed to test responses to a set of arguments reflecting the Chamber's political agenda to limit lawsuits and the liability of corporate wrongdoers.

The Chamber has decided to use this "survey" as a PR gimmick to publicly criticize two states where it is holding news conferences today - West Virginia and Illinois, with Madison County, Illinois being particularly targeted by the Chamber. As evidence of how preposterous these rankings are, *Site Selection* magazine ranked Illinois the third best business climate in the country. And in Madison County, part of the booming St. Louis suburbs, leaders say "their business climate is second to none," as reported in the July 10, 2004, *Belleville News Democrat*.

"I've seen a lot of things in the newspaper with tort reform and that stuff. But I've been in contact with local chambers of commerce trying to attract people to Madison County, and we agree Madison County is a good place to locate business,' [Madison County Board Chairman Alan] Dunstan said. 'There has been a lot of propaganda in the last election year.'"

Similarly, according to a message from West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin III, found on the West Virginia Development Office web site, West Virginia businesses are flourishing.
<http://www.wvdo.org/>

"The U.S. Chamber has a political interest in lambasting both these states, each of which is in the midst of heated partisan political battles over their state's legal system and so-called 'tort

reform,” said Doroshow. “The U.S. Chamber seems utterly unconcerned with the actual business climate or the impact their survey might have on the communities they are hurting.”

“With the U.S. Chamber attacking the very communities it should be promoting, a huge budget of special interest money now pouring into the organization to protect and defend some of America’s most harmful industries, and a far-reaching partisan political agenda, one has to ask, ‘What’s happened to the Chamber of Commerce?’” said Doroshow.

For more information on the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, see <http://centerjd.org>.

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