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**Center for Justice & Democracy Tells Congress:
Corporate Litigation Abuses Harm 99 Percent of Americans**

Washington, D.C. – “Hundreds if not thousands of so-called ‘tort reform’ laws and a series of recent Supreme Court decisions have stripped everyday people of their legal rights,” Center for Justice & Democracy Executive Director Joanne Doroshow said today in testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives’ Judiciary Committee’s Subcommittee on the Constitution and Civil Justice.

Doroshow told the Subcommittee that tort or personal injury cases now represent only 6 percent of all civil cases, while monetary disputes, like debt collections, represent 72 percent. Meanwhile, federal and state budget cuts have drastically scaled back access to justice, particularly for the economically disadvantaged. Due to the sequester, federal civil jury trials may be completely suspended beginning this fall. Said Doroshow, “Today, the sick, injured and violated who seek justice and accountability struggle to even get into court.”

In addition, said Doroshow, the 2011 Supreme Court decision *AT&T Mobility v. Concepcion* – which allows corporations to ban class actions and force consumers into biased, mandatory arbitration proceedings to resolve disputes – has had a dramatic impact on access to justice. This ruling gives corporate miscreants the power to strip Americans of their constitutional right to trial by jury and essentially immunize themselves from accountability for wrongdoing. Since this decision, notes Doroshow, class actions have been in free fall. Said Doroshow, “Today, lawsuits by the sick and injured are so non-threatening to the business world that the National Federation of Independent Businesses’ own members rank the issue of ‘lawsuits’ at 71 out of 75 issues of concern to small businesses, a lower rank than how to use Twitter.”

Among the many steps Congress must now take is to prohibit forced arbitration and class action bans. Said Doroshow, “The right to civil jury trial was something over which our Founding Fathers fought the Revolutionary War. Today’s anti-victim civil justice system is clearly not the legal system they envisioned for America.”

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