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PRESS ALERT

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STATEMENT OF THE CENTER FOR JUSTICE & DEMOCRACY ON ATRA'S SO-CALLED "JUDICIAL HELLHOLES"

New York - Last year, the Center for Justice & Democracy raised questions about the American Tort Reform Association (ATRA)'s annual "Judicial Hellhole" report after finding that in 12 jurisdictions that ATRA identified as too "plaintiff-friendly," minorities made up most of the population in nine and all but one had a larger minority population than the state it was in.

Confronted with last year's criticism, ATRA has repackaged its "Judicial Hellhole" report as a wholesale attack on judges - not juries - in nine jurisdictions, including the entire state of West Virginia.

The American public expects their judges to be fair and impartial. In particular, judges should not have to look over their shoulder to calculate how their decisions might play with the Big Business members of ATRA. Unlike legislators or officials of the executive branch, judges are not supposed to be advocates of particular interests.

ATRA's "Judicial Hellhole" report is nothing more than an intimidation tactic against judges who are not beholden to corporate interests. ATRA should be ashamed. When corporate-funded groups like this orchestrate national campaigns against local judges, the independence of our judiciary, and the very foundations of our democracy, are threatened.

For further information, contact the Center for Justice & Democracy, <http://centerjd.org>.