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Consumer Group Condemns U.S. Chamber of Commerce Report Attacking West Virginia

New York – The Center for Justice & Democracy (CJ&D) today called the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s fifth annual state liability rankings report, which attacks West Virginia’s business environment, “dishonest, unfair, and contrary to the evidence about the state’s business climate.” In its report released on March 27, the Chamber criticizes the business litigation climate of West Virginia based on nothing more than the views of corporate lawyers who defend corporate wrongdoers. Joanne Doroshow, Executive Director of CJ&D, said, “The U.S. Chamber seems utterly unconcerned with either protecting the health and safety of West Virginia consumers or with being honest with the public about the actual business climate of West Virginia, which is, in fact, growing.”

There is strong evidence that West Virginia’s economy is in better shape today than in recent memory. The state ranked among the ten lowest in the nation in terms of cost of doing business, according to the 2005 Milken Institute Cost of Doing Business Index, with costs thirteen percent below the national average. Its revenues for the 2004-5 budget year came in at over \$430 million – more than thirteen percent above original budget projections. In addition, since taking office in 2004, Governor Joe Manchin, in his “Open For Business” campaign, has dedicated state resources to continuing positive trends in the state’s economy with positive results already projected around job growth and investment.

According to Doroshow, “The U.S. Chamber, for several years, has used its annual rankings to publicly, dishonestly, and inaccurately criticize the business climates of states using a questionable survey of corporate lawyers including in-house counsel for major corporations. These surveys reflect nothing more than the Chamber’s political agenda to limit legitimate lawsuits and accountability for corporate wrongdoers.”

CJ&D’s full fact sheet on West Virginia can be found at <http://centerjd.org>

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