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Consumer Group Condemns Vicious Report Attacking Judges Across America

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New York – The Center for Justice & Democracy (CJ&D) today called the American Tort Reform Association’s “Judicial Hellholes 2006” report attacking judges in several regions around the country, “vicious and undemocratic, not to mention dishonest and ungrounded.” In its report released today, ATRA launches a ferocious attack on fair and independent judges based on the apparent views of its members that include polluters, tobacco companies, and the insurance industry, among other industries.

“Coming just weeks after elections in which voters soundly rejected judicial candidates backed by ATRA and other corporate-backed groups, this report is sheer nonsense, and certainly out of touch with the American public,” said Joanne Doroshow, Executive Director for CJ&D. “What’s more, it is a shameful violation of the very foundations of our democracy. The American public does not want judges to have to look over their shoulder to calculate how their decisions might play with corporate-backed special interest groups like this.”

Doroshow added, “ATRA believes that rulings by judges that hold industries accountable are bad for our country, harming local economies, when, in fact, the opposite is true. The economies in areas attacked by ATRA are strong and growing and one obvious reason is that these areas are not havens for corporate wrongdoing.”

For example, three counties are attacked in Illinois, yet all three areas are experiencing incredible business and employment growth, with Chicago/Cook County as corporate America’s top metropolitan area for the corporate facility projects in the country. South Florida is also attacked, yet South Florida is experiencing spectacular growth, and its cities are consistently ranked among the best cities to do business in America. West Virginia and the Rio Grande Valley and the Gulf Coast of Texas are also experiencing great job and business growth, while being called “Hellholes.” See, Facts About ATRA’s So-Called “Judicial Hellholes,” <http://centerjd.org>

According to Doroshow, “With money and politics already dominating the executive and legislative branches, our court system is one of the only places left in America where injured citizens can successfully confront powerful industries and institutions and stop misconduct. The

last thing we need are bogus attacks from groups like ATRA that threaten judicial independence, a cornerstone of our democracy, for the sake of restricting legitimate lawsuits against corporate wrongdoers.”

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