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Consumer Group Condemns U.S. Chamber of Commerce Report Attacking Illinois

Chicago – The Center for Justice & Democracy (CJ&D) today called the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s fifth annual state liability rankings report, which attacks Illinois’ business environment, “dishonest, unfair, and contrary to the evidence about the state’s positive business climate.” In its report expected to be released on March 27, the Chamber criticizes the business litigation climate of Illinois based on nothing more than the views of corporate lawyers who defend corporate wrongdoers, and will likely attack state political leaders because they have supported consumers’ legal rights.

“The U.S. Chamber seems utterly unconcerned with either protecting the health and safety of Illinois residents or with being honest about the actual business climate of Illinois, which is, in fact, strong and growing,” said Amber Hard, Staff Director of Center for Justice and Democracy-Illinois.

Illinois businesses and manufacturing plants are doing very well. Recently, Peoria’s Caterpillar posted its most profitable year ever hiring 6,000 new workers, Chrysler announced an additional production shift at its Belvidere plant, and Ford announced that Chicago’s plant would be preserved despite closing plants in other states. Several objective sources rank Illinois and Illinois cities as some of the best places to locate a business. *Site Selection Magazine* ranks Illinois 13 and Chicago as the top place to locate a business, while *Forbes* magazine ranks three Illinois cities in their top 150.

“Just last week, the Illinois Department of Employment Security announced that the Illinois unemployment rate hit its lowest point since 2000,” said Hard. “The U.S. Chamber’s attack on our business environment is totally inconsistent with the facts here on the ground.”

In fact, there is evidence from the business community that fear of litigation has minimal impact on a company’s business strategy. The National Association of Manufacturers surveyed corporate CEO’s at their most recent conference. Fear of litigation ranked as having the least negative impact on their company’s operation.

According to Hard, “The U.S. Chamber has for several years 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.

For CJ&D’s fact sheet on the Chamber’s attack on Illinois, please see http://www.centerjd.org/free/mythbusters-free/MB_ChamberIllinois.pdf

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