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CONSUMER GROUP RELEASES NEW REPORT SHOWING HOW CLASS ACTIONS HELP INDIVIDUALS AND SMALL BUSINESSES GET JUSTICE

Report comes as Senate Judiciary Committee holds first hearing since House passage of anti-civil justice bills

The Center for Justice & Democracy at New York Law School (CJ&D) released a new report today, *First Class Relief 2017: How Class Actions Benefit Those Who Are Injured, Defrauded And Violated*. The report updates CJ&D's 2014 report, *First Class Relief*, and describes important class actions that corporations have settled in recent months for financial fraud and abuse, sexual harassment, discrimination, price-fixing and product injuries.

Said CJ&D Executive Director Joanne Doroshow, "This report illustrates how anytime, anywhere, you could be sexually harassed, financially cheated or otherwise harmed by corporate misconduct. At any point, your small business could be ripped off by a larger company's illegal price-fixing. Joining a class action lawsuit is the only realistic way to seek justice, be compensated and stop the illegal behavior. Like our 2014 class action study, this new report shows how class actions help victims of corporate law-breaking and lead to changes in corporate behavior that otherwise would never be possible."

In one case described in *First Class Relief 2017*, a successful class action was brought by female sales representatives who were subjected to sexually-charged "jokes" and other offensive comments, were expected to drink alcohol, socialize with and tolerate sexual advances from co-workers, were denied promotions and were paid less than their male counterparts. Under the settlement, the company compensated class members with significant damages and changed its policies. In another case, Dow Chemical agreed to an \$835 million class action settlement – the largest ever recovered in a price-fixing case from a single defendant – on behalf of roughly 2,200 furniture, roofing material, appliance and other product manufacturers who were victims of a polyurethane price-fixing scheme.

In March 2017, the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation that would make it impossible for class actions like these to proceed. The bill is now before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, which is set to explore class action and other civil justice issues at a November 8, 2017 hearing.

Among the types of misconduct explored in *First Class Relief 2017: How Class Actions Benefit Those Who Are Injured, Defrauded And Violated*, which resulted in recent, successful class actions that compensated victims and stopped illegal behavior:

SMALL BUSINESSES AND PRICE-FIXING CARTELS

- Product Makers Victimized by Polyurethane Price-Fixing Scheme
- Independent Truck Stops Charged Ruinous Inflated Fees

CIVIL RIGHTS AND EMPLOYMENT

- Bank Discriminated Against Employees Based on Race
- Company Denied Health Insurance to Same Sex Spouse
- Telecom Company Discriminated Against Female Engineers
- Drug Company Harassed and Discriminated Against Female Sales Reps
- Insurance Company Discriminated Against Female Attorneys
- Ship Repair Company Harassed and Discriminated Against Female Shipyard Workers

FINANCIAL ABUSE AND CONSUMER/PATIENT FRAUD

- Bank Charged Military Members Unlawful Interest and Fees
- Bank Opened Fraudulent Bank Accounts in Customers' Names, Charged Them Fees and Ruined Their Credit
- Bank Illegally Froze Bank Account Funds
- Auto Insurers Cheated Members of the Military
- Life Insurer Defrauded Policyholders
- Cyberattack Caused Theft of Personal Information
- Debt Collector Illegally Harassed Customers
- Company Illegally Collected Personal Information
- Private Prison Company Terrorized the Poor and Disabled Over Fees
- Company Overcharged Patients for Medical Records
- Lenders and Insurers Fleeced Homeowners
- Bank Cheated Borrowers Over Interest
- Bank Illegally Pulled Credit Reports, or Made Credit Inquiries That Hurt Customers' Credit Scores
- Bank Charged Fraudulent Mortgage Fees
- Lender Charged Illegal Interest Rates on Loans and Then Tried to Collect the Debt
- Companies Illegally Cut Access to Prepaid Cards or Profited from Unused Paid-For Gift Cards

PRODUCTS

- Defective Vehicles Caused Economic Losses
- Defective Dog Bones Killed and Injured Pets
- Bank Coin-Counting Machines Shortchanged Customers
- Gun Defect Caused Misfires
- Deck Paint Defect Accelerated Deterioration

To download *First Class Relief 2017: How Class Actions Benefit Those Who Are Injured, Defrauded And Violated*, as well as the earlier 2014 study, click here.

<http://centerjd.org/content/first-class-relief-how-class-actions-benefit-those-who-are-injured-defrauded-and-violated>