



## DEFEND YOUR RIGHTS WEEK OF ACTION

MARCH 6-10, 2017

Over the next several weeks, the U.S. House Republicans are planning an all-out assault on a huge array of legal rights that will block real people from using the courts to seek justice. Public Citizen and our allies are leading a week of action to raise resistance to the raft of harmful legislation that is attempting to steal the rights of average Americans. It's unfair to let the bills go to a House floor vote without even having a real committee hearing. See below for details on the week of action. The bills we oppose are:

- [Fairness in Class Action Litigation Act of 2017](#) (H.R. 985, Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.))
  - This bill would change the requirements for certifying a class-action lawsuit so that only individuals who have suffered “an injury of the same type and scope” would be able to join together as a class to bring a case as well as creating other significant barriers to class certification. Several provisions seem specifically designed to make it more difficult to bring cases against toxic polluters and render it virtually impossible to bring race and gender discrimination class actions.
  - Public Citizen/Americans for Financial Reform contact: Amanda Werner
- [Furthering Asbestos Claim Transparency \(FACT\) Act of 2017](#) (H.R. 906, Rep. Blake Farenthold (R-Texas))
  - This bill would impose paperwork requirements on asbestos claims trusts, slowing or virtually stopping the ability of trusts to provide compensation for asbestos victims suffering with lethal diseases like mesothelioma. The bill adds insult to injury for victims and invades their privacy by requiring public disclosure of personal claim information, including portions of their social security numbers, opening the door to identity theft and possible discrimination.
  - Public Citizen contact: Susan Harley
- [Innocent Party Protection Party Act of 2017](#) (H.R. 725, Rep. Ken Buck (R-Colo.))
  - This bill has to do with whether cases are heard in federal or state courts; its purpose is to assist defendants in keeping cases in federal court.
  - Public Citizen contact: Allison Zieve
- [Lawsuit Abuse Reduction Act of 2017](#) (H.R. 720, Rep. Lamar Smith (R-Texas))
  - This bill would revise Rule 11 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure to require sanctions, rather than leaving the decision whether to impose sanctions to the discretion of federal judges. This will make litigation more complicated, costly, and inaccessible to consumers and employees.
  - Public Citizen contact: Allison Zieve
- [Protecting Access to Care Act of 2017](#) (H.R. 1215, Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa))
  - This bill take the unprecedented step of preempting a broad swath of state medical malpractice laws—an area in which federal law provides no remedy and has historically left to the states. The bill would deter injured patients from pursuing legitimate claims by capping non-economic damages at \$250,000, affecting state statutes of limitation, joint and several liability, and attorney fees. This bill is incredibly broad: it covers nursing homes, doctors that sexually assault patients and also lets doctors off the hook for negligent prescribing, for some drugs and devices.
  - Public Citizen has recently released a [report](#), “[The Medical Malpractice Scapegoat](#),” that outlines the ways in which the real problem in the American health care industry is patient injury and debunks the myths around the supposedly high cost of medical malpractice payments.
  - Public Citizen contacts: Allison Zieve and Taylor Lincoln

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## Schedule

### **Monday: Defend Your Rights Week Kick-off Day**

- All groups will highlight their participation in coordinated week of opposition to defend our legal rights at risk.

### **Tuesday: Restoring Our Rights Day**

- Focus will be on introduction of six good bills (**3pm press conference in Capitol Visitors Center 209-08**): Arbitration Fairness Act, Court Legal Access and Student Support (CLASS) Act, Justice for Servicemembers Act, Justice for Victims of Fraud Act, Mandatory Arbitration Transparency Act, and the Restoring Statutory Rights and Interests of the States Act.
- Also work opposing the expected vote of H.R. 725, the Innocent Party Protection Party Act of 2017.

### **Wednesday: Real People, Real Justice Day**

- Focus will be on raising the voice of real victims who have used the court system and on opposing:
  - H.R. 985, the Fairness in Class Action Litigation Act of 2017;
  - H.R. 906, the Furthering Asbestos Claim Transparency (FACT) Act of 2017; and
  - H.R. 720, Lawsuit Abuse Reduction Act of 2017.

### **Thursday: Defend Patients Day**

- Focus will be on opposing the Protecting Access to Care Act of 2017.
- Public Citizen will highlight its recent [report \(PDF\)](#), “The Medical Malpractice Scapegoat,” showing that the assumptions that limiting liability would reduce costs are wrong.

### **Friday: Justice for All, Not Just Big Business Day**

- Focus will be on the fact that corporations, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Donald Trump, and other elites would further benefit from these bills whereas consumers and small businesses would be harmed.
- Public Citizen’s U.S. Chamber Watch project will highlight “The Chamber of Litigation” [report \(PDF\)](#) and its upcoming sequel; making the connection between defending the legal system and protecting the rights of all companies as well as the public.

**Follow #RightsAtRisk on Twitter for all the latest on the campaign.**

For general questions about the Defend Your Rights Week of Action, please email Susan Harley, deputy director of Public Citizen’s Congress Watch division at [sharley@citizen.org](mailto:sharley@citizen.org).