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February 14, 2017

U.S. House of Representatives
Judiciary Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Opposition to H.R. 906, the Furthering Asbestos Claim Transparency Act

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of Public Citizen's more than 400,000 members and supporters, we strongly urge you to oppose H.R. 906, the "Furthering Asbestos Claim Transparency Act." Keeping the courthouse doors open for victims of corporate wrongdoing has been central to Public Citizen's mission since our founding 45 years ago. H.R. 906 would delay the vital work of asbestos compensation trusts.

H.R. 906 aims to protect big business at the expense of victims. The "Furthering Asbestos Claim Transparency (FACT) Act" invades the privacy of asbestos disease victims and will have the effect of delaying compensation for those suffering with lethal diseases like mesothelioma. Congress should act to protect these victims instead of opening the door for the asbestos industry to further escape accountability for poisoning the public and exposing trust claimants to scams, identity theft, and other privacy violations.

Instead of helping asbestos victims, H.R. 906 would put unworkable burdens on claims trusts. For example, the bill would impose a requirement for trusts to respond to any and all corporate defendants' information requests. Such a requirement would have the effect of slowing or virtually stopping the ability of trusts to provide compensation for victims. Since patients diagnosed with fatal asbestos-caused diseases like mesothelioma have very short expected lifespans, a delay in justice could leave victims' next of kin struggling to pay medical and funeral bills.

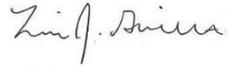
The FACT Act does nothing to improve the lives of those facing an asbestos death sentence through no fault of their own. The bill instead adds insult to injury and inexcusably invades the privacy of victims by requiring public disclosure of personal claim information, including portions of their social security numbers, opening the door to identity theft and possible discrimination.

Instead of making it more difficult for class actions to move forward and harder for asbestos victims to be compensated, the House Judiciary Committee should be focused on ending practices like forced arbitration, which has privatized the court system and locks unknowing consumers into an expensive, biased practice that has no required founding in law. Moreover, instead of further victimizing asbestos claimants, Congress should pass real transparency legislation requiring companies to publicly disclose

activities related to the manufacture, processing, distribution, sales, importation, transport or storage of asbestos or asbestos-containing products.

Please help protect the American justice system -- oppose H.R. 906.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa Gilbert".

Lisa Gilbert
Director
Public Citizen's Congress Watch division