



# NEWS

## AMERICANS FOR TAX REFORM

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## Shakedown, Part III – The Trial Lawyers Go After “Environmentally Safe” Gasoline

*First, it was tobacco, then asbestos. Now, trial lawyers are hoping to cash in by suing companies over gasoline additives...and slowing clean-up efforts in the process.*

WASHINGTON – In response to air quality concerns in large American cities, Congress added a provision to the Clean Air Act of 1990 that required additives be added to gasoline to make it burn “cleaner.” The most viable additive for this purpose is a chemical called MTBE, but some claim this chemical is contaminating ground water.

When MTBE-enhanced gas began to leak out of aging underground storage tanks at gas stations across the country, some of that MTBE found its way into municipal drinking water systems, resulting in millions of dollars in clean-up costs. But while municipal authorities and responsible refiners are taking steps to clean up the mess, trial lawyers have rushed in to make a quick buck...or millions.

**“Trial lawyers pocketed billions by exploiting those made sick by tobacco and asbestos, keeping most of the settlements for themselves and leaving little for their supposed victims,”** said taxpayer advocate Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform. **“It seems the lawyers have found another way to milk the system. As they sue anyone and everyone involved in the chemical and gasoline business, money is being diverted from ongoing clean-up operations into their own pockets. The Orange County Water District suit, the latest example of this trend, must be stopped or every water district in California could be vulnerable.”**

Local district attorneys are bringing lawsuits against those responsible for spills, to force those companies to clean up their mess. But in places like California, private trial lawyers are rushing to canvass the state, signing up water authorities to sue chemical and energy companies. The Orange County Water District is the latest case. These suits seek “damages” for compensation that has not even occurred yet, which will go to the lawyers’ bank accounts, rather than action by polluters to clean up their messes. And in the end, as usual, there is little money left over after the lawyers take their share.

**“What makes the irony most rich is that the current environmental damage is being caused by an expensive, troublesome government mandate that was intended to make the environment cleaner,”** Norquist continued. **“Government mandates added cost to every gallon of gas, then government mandates polluted the ground water, then government tort laws allowed the lawyers**

*Americans for Tax Reform is a non-partisan coalition of taxpayers and taxpayer groups who oppose all tax increases. For more information or to arrange an interview please contact Jonathan Collegio at (202) 785-0266 or by email at [jcollegio@atr.org](mailto:jcollegio@atr.org).*

to profit from that pollution and inhibit its clean-up. America needs regulatory reform and tort reform!”