



NEWS

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Unions Try to Stop Asbestos Litigation Reform

Americans for Tax Reform opposes Labor Union Efforts to Weaken Asbestos Reform Legislation in Senate Judiciary Committee.

WASHINGTON — Americans for Tax Reform (ATR) strongly opposes lobbying efforts by labor unions, such as the AFL-CIO, to urge Democratic Senators to vote against long overdue asbestos reform legislation.

On May 22, 2003 Senate Judiciary Chairman Orrin Hatch (UT-R) introduced S. 1125, the Fairness in Asbestos Injury Resolution Act of 2003, or the FAIR Act in an attempt to bring fairness and certainty to the current, out-of-control asbestos litigation system. In order to achieve that goal, the bill establishes a special court of asbestos claims in the executive branch of the federal government, creates much-needed national, objective medical criteria for asbestos claims, and creates a privately financed Asbestos Injury Claims Resolution Fund to provide for claims payments that might be necessary decades from now.

“The legislation is a product of efforts led by Senator Hatch, along with several other parties, including medical victims of asbestos, organized labor, manufacturers and insurers, to help formulate compromise legislation that will be enacted this year,” said Grover Norquist, President of ATR. **“Unfortunately, some union leaders are more concerned about filling their treasury coffers than getting compensation for their sick members.”**

ATR has long called for including the following provisions to any asbestos reform: Establishing objective medical criteria to determine asbestos-related impairment; Liberalizing the statute of limitation to remove the incentive for premature filings; Eliminating the consolidation of asbestos related claims and instead require individual trials that will focus on the facts of each specific case; and Requiring lawsuits to be filed in the states where the plaintiff resides or where exposure occurred.

“Chairman Hatch has included many of the requirements needed to bring about a final and fair resolution to the asbestos litigation crisis,” said Norquist. **“However, if the unions are successful in weakening the medical criteria or adding a taxpayer backed trust fund, the bill becomes another vehicle for tort lawyers to collect large sums of money at the expense of asbestos victims, the economy, and the American taxpayer.”**

Americans for Tax Reform is a non-partisan coalition of taxpayers and taxpayer groups who oppose all federal and state 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.