

# More allies in our fight for justice



By Sharon J. Arkin

This is another entry in my series of messages about other organizations that stand with us in the fight for justice for our clients. Some help at a grassroots level, some in an academic context, some in the Legislature and Congress and others in the courts. It is important that we, as consumer lawyers, support these organizations, both professionally and financially, and acknowledge their important and valuable contributions to keeping the courthouse doors open for our clients.



**Public Justice** ([publicjustice.net](http://publicjustice.net)) is one of the groups that fight in the courts all across the country to protect consumers. Public Justice is led by Arthur Bryant, a brilliant strategist, inspiring speaker and all around great human being. Public Justice and its team of committed and talented lawyers both initiate litigation and intervene in cases as amicus or as another interested party to assure that fairness prevails. The organization has special projects directed to protecting consumers from binding mandatory arbitration, unfair class action settlements, overbroad federal preemption, secret settlements and sealed court files, as well as an extraordinarily successful campaign against mountaintop mining. Public Justice is always interested in working with attorneys on litigation and if you have a particularly knotty problem that you see affecting consumers across the country, reach out to Public Justice for help.



**United Policyholders** ([unitedpolicyholders.org](http://unitedpolicyholders.org)) is a grassroots organization that works at many levels to protect consumers.

UP, as it is affectionately known among its supporters, provides direct person-to-person education to insurance policyholders in California and elsewhere. It provides seminars and lectures to consumers, teaching them how to protect themselves before a disaster strikes, and how to deal with their insurance companies when disaster claims handling goes awry. UP also has a very active amicus committee that works hard, and effectively, to protect consumers' interests in the courts as well as on the ground. If you can contribute time to present programs for UP or can contribute to its amicus efforts, your help is always welcome.

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## Consumer Attorneys Public Interest Foundation CAPIF

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**Consumer Attorneys Public Interest Fund and Civil Justice Research and Education Project** ([www.protectconsumerjustice.org](http://www.protectconsumerjustice.org)) are both non profit organizations associated with CAOC and focused on educating consumers about their rights. Both organizations operate with the goal of changing the public dialogue about consumer attorneys, what they do and how they are an integral part of keeping courthouse doors open for the protection of consumers. CAPIF operates by providing donations to non-profit organizations that represent environmental concerns, children, workers, seniors, crime victims and consumers and those that advocate for those interests in the State Capitol. CJREP researches issues involving the civil justice system and educates the public about the importance of that system, including the right to trial by jury and the role of the contingent fee system in ensuring access to justice. Supporting these organizations is essential in assuring that our clients have

someplace to take their claims when they have been wrongfully injured.



**Consumer Watchdog** ([consumerwatchdog.org](http://consumerwatchdog.org)) (formerly the Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights) is a powerful and effective grassroots organization that has been fighting corrupt corporations and crooked politicians since 1985. They have spoken out on behalf of patients, ratepayers and policyholders and have waged incredibly effective campaigns supporting consumer rights. Their work drives public opinion and raises awareness of the problems faced by the thousands of consumers they have helped over the years.



**Consumers for Automobile Reliability and Safety** ([carconsumers.com](http://carconsumers.com)) (CARS) is a respected voice for the public interest, working to expose illegal practices, improve auto safety technology, and ensure that unsafe, seriously defective vehicles are recalled and fixed *before* people are hurt. CARS is also on the forefront of exposing illegal practices such as "lemon laundering" of hazardous vehicles across state lines. This organization has been an ally not only of consumers generally, but of CAOC specifically in our lobbying efforts to make change and protect consumers in the Legislature.

That's all for this edition. We'll be raising your awareness even more in future columns! ■