



CONSUMER ATTORNEYS OF CALIFORNIA

Seeking Justice for All

CAOC-led coalition rebuffs threat to asbestos victims

AB 597 part of national effort backed by Koch brothers, other corporations

SACRAMENTO (April 24, 2015) – Facing opposition from Consumer Attorneys of California and its allies, a California legislator has mothballed a bill that would have dramatically limited the legal rights of veterans, laborers and others dying as a result of exposure to asbestos.

AB 597, authored by Assemblyman Ken Cooley (D-Rancho Cordova), threatened to add expensive and time-consuming legal hurdles for victims of asbestos-related diseases grappling with terminal illness while racing the clock to resolve legal cases before they die. Mesothelioma and other lung cancers can develop 30 to 40 years after asbestos enters the body, but once diagnosed the disease can kill in as little as a year or less.

The measure, which was set for its first hearing April 28 in the Assembly Judiciary Committee, was based on model legislation drafted by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a group primarily funded by major corporations including Koch Industries. Georgia-Pacific, a Koch Industries company, has faced massive liability stemming from its use of asbestos in drywall products. Not coincidentally, Georgia-Pacific is on the board of directors of the organization sponsoring AB 597, the Civil Justice Association of California.

Veterans, construction workers, maintenance workers and others were among the groups threatened by exposure to asbestos. Dubbed a modern miracle by its manufacturers for its ability to withstand heat and flames, asbestos was used in shipyards, refineries, power plants, schools and in a variety of products. Asbestos was heavily marketed into the latter half of the 20th Century even though manufacturers first learned of its dangers in the 1930s.

CAOC amassed a strong coalition in opposition to AB 597, including the California Labor Federation, the State Building & Construction Trades Council of California, the Sacramento Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO, the California Professional Firefighters, the State Teamsters and the Environmental Working Group, along with nearly every labor and democratic group organized in Cooley's district.

At least 10,000 Americans die from asbestos-related causes every year. And while asbestos is no longer produced in the U.S., its use is still legal, and over the last decade 8 million pounds of the deadly mineral have been imported and made their way into structures across the country, including many in California.

Consumer Attorneys of California is a professional organization of plaintiffs' attorneys representing consumers seeking accountability against wrongdoers in cases involving personal injury, product liability, environmental degradation and other causes.

For more information:

**J.G. Preston, CAOC Press Secretary, 916-669-7126, jgpreston@caoc.org
Eric Bailey, CAOC Communications Director, 916-669-7122, ebailey@caoc.org**