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TEENS TROUBLED BY JACKPOT JUSTICE New Survey Finds Teens Think Most Lawsuits Are Filed Just to Make Money And Fear Being Sued

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Annapolis (August 11, 2004) – The majority of Maryland teenagers between the ages of 16 and 18 believe most people file lawsuits to win big money, fear being sued and think people should take responsibility for their actions, according to a recent survey commissioned by Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse (CALA).

The survey finds that nearly eight out of 10 teenagers believe most people file lawsuits to win big money—not to bring justice to those who were wronged or harmed. “It’s troubling that our children believe our civil justice system is being abused as a means to get rich,” said Carrie Capuco, Executive Director of Maryland Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse (MDCALA). “Individuals, who encourage people to sue anyone over anything, have helped to erode our civil justice system. Too many people file lawsuits hoping to become rich.”

Eighty-one percent of Maryland teens surveyed also said they would be concerned that they or their family would be sued if they caused an accident or were involved in a disagreement with somebody.

“Frivolous lawsuits are so pervasive in our society today that our youth are afraid of being sued,” said Capuco. “All you have to do is turn on the television or flip through the newspapers to find ads encouraging people to sue.”

The following are the key findings from Maryland:

- 78 percent of teenagers said most people file lawsuits to win big money.
- 81 percent of teenagers said they would be concerned that they or their family would be sued if they cause an accident or were involved in a disagreement with somebody.
- 94 percent of teenagers agreed with the statement, “People should take responsibility for their actions instead of filing a lawsuit and blaming others.”
- 88 percent of teenagers said people should take more responsibility for their actions when asked about their thoughts on such lawsuits as those filed against fast food companies by people who allege the food made them fat.
- 78 percent of teenagers disagreed with the statement, “People should feel free to file a lawsuit so they can win money whenever something goes wrong.”
- 65 percent of teenagers said they and their family would NOT be likely to sue if they were injured or involved in a disagreement with somebody.

“It’s interesting that teenagers have a better understanding of the problem than many adults and most of our legislators,” Capuco said. “Our youth should grow up in a society where personal responsibility is valued and our courts are used for justice not greed. We need meaningful reform, and we need to it now.”

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Survey Methodology

The findings reported in this release are from a telephone survey conducted by the opinion research firm, Braun Research, commissioned by Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse. Braun Research completed 1,850 interviews with teenagers in the U.S. from July 12 to July 23, 2004. Braun interviewed 609 16-year olds, 620 17-year olds and 621 18-year olds. The study included a national sample of 800 teenagers and an oversample of teenagers in the states of California, Maryland, Texas, and West Virginia to yield 300 respondents in each of those states.

A random sample of households where teenagers were known to exist was drawn from a national sample through various sources including birth records, magazine subscriptions, and school information. Targeted samples were drawn for the national sample, and for the four state oversamples. The margin of error for the national sample is +/- 2.28 percentage points at a confidence level of 95 percent. The sampling error for the results of each over-sample of teens (n=300) is +/- 5.8 percentage points at a confidence level of 95 percent.

Council of American Survey Research Organizations (CASRO) rules of parental permission apply only to telephone interviews conducted with participants under age 16. Because the age range for participation was 16 to 18, Braun interviewed by asking for household members. If there were two (or more) teens in that age range, a random participant was selected. No respondents were screened by parents, and no permission was asked.

About MDCALA

Maryland Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse (MDCALA) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, grass roots, public education organization dedicated to serving as a watchdog over the legal system and those who would seek to abuse it for undeserved gain. MDCALA strives to educate the public on the costs and consequences of lawsuit abuse.

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