



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 28, 2006

Contact: Slade O'Brien
561-441-5866

NEW PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY SHOWS FLORIDIANS FED UP WITH LAWSUIT ABUSE, STRONGLY SUPPORT REFORM LEGISLATION

Grassroots watchdog group kicks-off statewide campaign against lawsuit abuse; finds 80% support for proposed lawsuit reform bill already enacted by 37 other states

Orlando – Pointing to a new survey showing Floridians are hungry for lawsuit reform, grassroots watchdog group Florida Stop Lawsuit Abuse (FSLA) today launched a statewide public education campaign to bring more fairness and common sense to Florida's courts and challenge those who abuse the civil justice system.

At a press conference today at Three Point Bowling Center in Orlando, FSLA announced the results of a survey that showed that 82% of Floridians are concerned that frivolous lawsuits increase the costs of goods and services for Florida families. Additionally, nearly three out of four Floridians believe people who file lawsuits do so primarily to win big money, not to seek justice.

"The survey's findings echo the concerns we are hearing from consumers, small business owners, doctors and taxpayers across our state," said Slade O'Brien, executive director of FSLA. "Floridians have a real problem with personal injury lawyers and people who see lawsuits and our courts as a way to get rich.

"This lawsuit-happy mentality hurts all of us. FSLA is determined to bring the fight against lawsuit abuse to every community across Florida and ensure that every citizen's voice is heard."

FSLA will be traveling across the state to educate Floridians about the problem of lawsuit abuse and what they can do to stop it. The group says a critical step in bringing more fairness to Florida's courts is reforming current Florida law that can force a person to pay up to 2 million dollars more in damages than the person actually caused.

The legislature is expected to consider reform legislation this session that would change the law so a person can only be made to pay for his or her fair share of a loss – not for the damages caused by another. Thirty-seven other states have enacted similar reform legislation, and 8 out of 10 Floridians would favor such legislation, according to the group's survey.

"Our legislators have an opportunity to fix one of the main problems that encourages lawsuit abuse in Florida," stated O'Brien. "Florida citizens want to see fairness in our courts, not lawsuits that target people based on their ability to pay instead of the extent of their responsibility. It's time for our legislators to stand up to the personal injury lawyers and restore fairness to our courts."

(more)

The survey's findings include:

- **75%** of Floridians are concerned that lawsuits are harming Florida's economy.
- **82%** of Floridians are concerned that frivolous lawsuits and the threat of liability increases the cost of goods and services for working families.
- **78%** of Floridians believe that personal injury lawyer advertising encourages people to sue even if they have not been injured.
- **74%** of Floridians believe most people file lawsuits to win big money.
- **90%** of Floridians believe a person should only be responsible for paying the damages that he or she actually causes, and should not be held responsible for damages caused by another.
- **81%** of Floridians would favor legislation to change current Florida law and establish that a person can only be made to pay for his fair share of a loss—not for the damages caused by another.

Joseph O'Lear, owner of Three Point Bowling Center and a member of the FSLA Advisory Board, voiced concern that current Florida laws make businesses like his an attractive target for lawsuits. "I know first-hand how a lawsuit can threaten a small business like my bowling alley. I may not be at fault, but because I'm the one with the deepest pocket, I'm the one the personal injury lawyers go after. It's simply not fair, and it costs every one of us. If my bowling alley gets hit with a junk lawsuit, that means I either have to charge my customers more to bowl or I have to lay-off employees. We need common sense lawsuit reform now."

###

Florida Stop Lawsuit Abuse (FSLA) is a grassroots group dedicated to challenging those who abuse Florida's legal system and educating the public about the costs and consequences of lawsuit abuse. FSLA is supported by individual citizens, small business owners, doctors and taxpayers. To learn more about FSLA, visit us online at www.FloridaStopLawsuitAbuse.com

Survey Methodology

Florida Stop Lawsuit Abuse commissioned the survey conducted by Braun Research. The survey was conducted February 9-13, 2006, among 508 adults 18 or older in the state of Florida. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 4.35%. Interviews were monitored at random.

Sampling for this study was conducted using a national probability sample of all exchanges and area codes across the state of Florida. All interviews were conducted using a computer assisted telephone interviewing system. Statistical weights were designed from United States Census Bureau statistics.