



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 11, 2006

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Study gives low marks to Florida's civil justice system

Legislation passed during 2006 session could help state rise in the rankings

TALLAHASSEE – Florida was at the bottom of the heap in a new nationwide study that evaluates economic impacts felt by states as a result of its existing tort system, according to the Pacific Research Institute.

The study, "U.S. Tort Liability Index: 2006 Report," ranked Florida among the bottom 10 states, placing the state 42nd for its high rate of monetary losses in civil justice lawsuits, threat of litigation and an overall lack of tort reform. Unfair and outdated liability laws reward lawsuit abuse, impede job creation and impose higher costs on everything consumers buy in many states, including Florida, the study found.

However, these rankings were completed before the passage of significant civil justice reforms approved by the 2006 Legislature. These reforms should help Florida rise in the rankings.

"Our work to improve Florida's civil justice system has just begun," said William Large, president of the Florida Justice Reform Institute. "With the passage of joint and several liability and class action reforms this year, we have taken a significant step to improve Florida's civil justice system – one that I am confident will have a direct impact on our state's economy as well as how our state's tort system is viewed."

Ranking first in the study's tort liability index is Texas. While Texas once ranked among the bottom states for its civil justice system, 10 years of aggressive and significant tort reform has helped place Texas first in the study's "tort liability index." The ranking exemplifies how meaningful reform can have substantial impacts on a state's economic wellbeing.

According to the study, states that adopt legal reforms experience stronger economic growth, higher standards of living and a business climate more conducive to innovation, new investment and new companies.

"I am confident that if we continue to seek common sense reforms like those passed by the Legislature this year, it will only be a matter of time before Florida's civil justice system ranks among one of the best in the nation for its fairness and predictability," Large said.

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