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**NEW SURVEY FINDS THAT ONLY SIXTEEN PERCENT OF AMERICAN  
ADULTS TRUST THE LEGAL SYSTEM  
TO DEFEND THEM AGAINST BASELESS CLAIMS**

**Seventy-Six Percent Of Adults Believe That Fear Of Frivolous Lawsuits  
Discourages Americans From Performing Normal Activities**

New York, NY – June 27, 2005 – A new survey commissioned by Common Good and conducted by Harris Interactive® among American adults has found that only 16 percent of those surveyed trust the legal system to defend them against baseless claims. Fifty-four percent do not trust the legal system, and 30 percent are not sure. Seventy-six percent of those surveyed agree that fear of frivolous lawsuits discourages people from performing normal activities.

The survey results will be presented at a conference of judges and scholars taking place in Philadelphia later today and tomorrow. The conference, *Lawsuits and Liberty: A Forum Addressing the Role of Civil Justice in a Free Society*, will address how distrust of civil justice undermines freedom to make sensible daily choices.

Harris Interactive conducted the survey online among a nationally representative sample of 2,604 U.S. adults, 18 years old or older. All interviewing was conducted between May 20 and May 23, 2005.

“The fact that only 16% of American adults trust the legal system to defend them against baseless claims is a stunning indictment of American justice,” said Philip K. Howard, Chair of Common Good. “This explains why legal fear has replaced Americans’ freedom to use their common sense. To rebuild the public’s trust, we must restore reliability to our system of justice.”

Other findings from the poll include the following:

On how the legal system currently functions:

- 83 percent of those surveyed agree that the legal system makes it too easy to make invalid claims.
- Only 43 percent agree that the overall effects of the system on society are reasonable.

- Only 33 percent agree that the system provides timely and reliable resolutions of disputes.

On the need for reform:

- 56 percent think that there are fundamental changes needed to make the civil justice system work better. 12 percent think that the system needs to be completely rebuilt.
- 62 percent strongly agree that we need to have more judges who will turn back frivolous lawsuits. (Another 26 percent agree somewhat.)
- 48 percent strongly agree that lawyers who take on lawsuits that are frivolous should be fined. (Another 29 percent agree somewhat.)

On how Americans use the legal system:

- 67 percent strongly agree that there is an increasing tendency for people to threaten legal action when something goes wrong. (Another 27 percent agree somewhat.)
- 55 percent strongly agree that many people use the justice system almost like a lottery – they start lawsuits to see if they can win millions. (Another 32 percent agree somewhat.)

### **Survey Methodology**

The study among the general public was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive® on behalf of Common Good between May 20 and May 23, 2005 among a nationwide cross section of 2,604 U.S. adults aged 18 or older who. Figures for age, sex, race, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

Though this online sample is not a probability sample, in theory, with probability samples of this size, one could say with 95 percent certainty that the results for the overall sample have a sampling error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

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### **About Harris Interactive®**

Harris Interactive Inc. ([www.harrisinteractive.com](http://www.harrisinteractive.com)), the 15<sup>th</sup> largest and fastest-growing market research firm in the world, is a Rochester, NY-based global research company that blends premier strategic consulting with innovative and efficient methods of investigation, analysis and application. Known for *The Harris Poll*® and for pioneering Internet-based research methods, Harris Interactive conducts proprietary and public research to help its clients achieve clear, material and enduring results. Harris Interactive combines its intellectual capital, databases and technology to advance market leadership through its U.S. offices and wholly owned subsidiaries, HI Europe in London

([www.hieurope.com](http://www.hieurope.com)), Novartis in Paris ([www.novartis.com](http://www.novartis.com)), and through an independent global network of affiliate market research companies. EOE M/F/D/V.

### **About Common Good**

Common Good ([www.cgood.org](http://www.cgood.org)) is a bi-partisan legal reform coalition dedicated to restoring common sense to American law. Its board is composed of leaders in a wide range of fields: former government officials, including Howard Baker, Griffin Bell, Bill Bradley, Newt Gingrich, Eric Holder, George McGovern, Diane Ravitch, Alan Simpson, and Richard Thornburgh; current and former university presidents, including Gov. Thomas Kean, George Rupp, and John Silber, and numerous other leaders in education, health care, law, business and public policy. The Chair of Common Good is Philip K. Howard, a lawyer and author of The Death of Common Sense and The Collapse of the Common Good.

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