

# COMMON GOOD

REFORMING AMERICA'S LAWSUIT CULTURE

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## **M-LAW'S SEVENTH ANNUAL WACKY WARNING LABEL CONTEST HIGHLIGHTS THE NEED TO RESTORE RELIABLE LAW, CHAMPIONED BY COMMON GOOD**

### **Ridiculous Warning Labels Are One More Sign Of The Evident Need For Legal Reform In America**

New York, NY – January 6, 2003 – Common Good, the national, bipartisan, legal reform coalition, applauds the Michigan Lawsuit Abuse Watch, M-LAW, on its annual Wacky Warning Label Contest, the winners of which were announced today ([www.wackywarnings.com](http://www.wackywarnings.com)). This year's winning labels are:

1. A label on a bottle of drain cleaner which reads: "If you do not understand, or cannot read, all directions, cautions and warnings, do not use this product."
2. A label on a snow sled for children which warns: "Beware: sled may develop high speed under certain snow conditions."
3. A label on a 12-inch rack for storing compact disks which reads: "Do not use as a ladder."
4. A five-inch brass fishing lure with a three-pronged hook on the end which warns: "Harmful if swallowed."
5. A smoke detector which warns: "Do not use the Silence Feature in emergency situations. It will not extinguish a fire."

The contest, now in its seventh year, highlights the ridiculous warning labels that have become commonplace, as Americans respond to fear of litigation by seeking to protect themselves in any way possible.

"Fear of litigation has become pervasive in America," said Philip K. Howard, Chair of Common Good, "and, while this contest is naturally funny, the underlying problem is a very serious one. Legal fear is undermining our way of life, causing reasonable people to act unreasonably."

Throughout America, the impact of legal fear is evident:

- Doctors now annually order an estimated \$100 billion in unnecessary medical procedures and prescriptions, in order to protect themselves from lawsuits;
- Teachers are often unable to maintain discipline in their classrooms for fear of being accused of violating the rights of the disruptive students;

- Cities are literally cutting the branches off of trees in parks in order to ensure that they are not sued if a child climbs a tree and falls.

*Common Good is a bi-partisan legal reform coalition dedicated to overhauling America's lawsuit culture. Its board is composed of leaders in a wide range of fields: former government officials, including Griffin Bell, Newt Gingrich, Eric Holder, George McGovern, Diane Ravitch, Alan Simpson, and Richard Thornburgh; current and former university presidents, including Tom Kean, George Rupp, and John Silber, and numerous other leaders in education, healthcare, 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.*

*Further information on Common Good is available at [www.cgood.org](http://www.cgood.org).*