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NEWS RELEASE

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CONSUMER ADVOCATES OPPOSE ALLSTATE INSURANCE COMPANY'S EFFORTS TO HIDE ITS POST-KATRINA PAY-OUT PROCEDURES

Public Justice, a national public interest law firm headquartered in Washington D.C., is asking a New Orleans federal court to make sure that Allstate Insurance Company can't get away with hiding its practices and policies that illegally left homeowners empty-handed after Hurricane Katrina.

Representing the Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights (FTCR), a consumer watchdog group, Public Justice today filed an opposition to Allstate's motion to seal the trial exhibits in *Weiss v. Allstate*, the case of a New Orleans couple who earlier this year won a \$2.8 million verdict against Allstate for refusing a hurricane-related claim.

The insurance company has asked the court to either return or seal exhibits used in the trial. Those exhibits include Allstate's manual for handling claims and an operational guide for subcontractors engaged to work on Katrina-related damage.

Opposing Allstate's motion, FTCR says the trial exhibits "provide insight into Allstate's decision-making process" and that denying public access to them "would directly impede FCTR's mission of educating the public about insurance practices and abuses."

FCTR, which has called for comprehensive insurance reform, says Allstate and other insurance companies have accepted premium payments from customers like the Weisses for years, only to deny or drastically reduce property owners' claims when catastrophe strikes.

"It appears that Allstate devised its claims-handling process to avoid paying claims to homeowners and did so at the very same time homeowners were, quite literally, stranded and desperate due to the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina," said Michael Lucas, a Public Justice attorney. "These records shed light on Allstate's behavior after Hurricane Katrina and Allstate is afraid of the public scrutiny."

Public Justice cooperating counsel Brian D. Katz, Stephen J. Herman, Joseph E. Cain, and Soren E. Gisleson of Herman Herman Katz & Cotlar, LLP in New Orleans are also representing FTCR.

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