



**Illinois Lawsuit
Abuse Watch**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**NEW STUDY FROM WATCHDOG GROUP SHOWS CITY OF CHICAGO SPENT
STAGGERING \$85 MILLION ON LAWSUITS IN 2010, EARNING CHICAGO THE
COSTLY TITLE: “THE CITY THAT SETTLES”**

**I-LAW urges city officials to adopt aggressive approach in fighting lawsuits instead of
shelling out tens of millions of dollars to settle, a policy change that will reduce costs
and allow more money for schools, police, parks and roads**

(Chicago) – A study released today from grassroots legal watchdog group Illinois Lawsuit Abuse Watch (I-LAW) finds the City of Chicago’s notoriety as a target for lawsuits has cost the City a budget-busting \$85 million for litigation in 2010 alone – millions that could have gone to hiring more police officers or teachers or avoiding layoffs of city workers.

In the last three years, Chicago has been hit with 900 lawsuits, which means City government is sued almost every single day.

“It has become painfully clear that the City of Chicago is perceived as an easy mark by some personal injury lawyers and has earned a reputation not as ‘The City That Works’ but as ‘The City That Settles,’” explained Travis Akin, I-LAW Executive Director. “Shedding that costly reputation and committing to aggressively fighting lawsuits filed against the City could help save tens of millions of taxpayer dollars, allowing the City to shore up the budget, hire more cops and teachers and avoid more crippling cuts.”

I-LAW believes the tens of millions spent fighting and settling lawsuits filed against the City is money that would be better spent on more worthwhile services, many of which are now being cut due to the City’s budget deficit. Had the City of Chicago’s \$84.6 million expenditure on litigation costs in 2010 been available for other, more worthwhile services and programs, the City would have been able to:

- Hire 1,239 police officers;
- Pay for 1,226 teachers;
- Fund the entire Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy Program (C.A.P.S.) for 17 years;
- Complete rehabilitation projects at 15 high schools;
- Pay for intensive teaching programs for 18,671 students;
- Fund the Chicago Public Schools’ Youth Advocacy Program for 17 years;
- Resurface 65 miles of Chicago roads;
- Pay for 1,197 firefighters;
- Hire 1,119 new public health nurses;
- Pay for 2,937 art projects at Chicago senior centers, or
- Plant 155,801 trees.

As Mayor Rahm Emanuel looks for ways to cut waste from the City's budget and plug the deficit, I-LAW is urging him to follow the lead taken two years ago by the Chicago Police Department (CPD), which announced in 2009 a new policy of fighting, and no longer quickly settling, lawsuits filed against CPD. And that aggressive, common sense policy worked. **The number of lawsuits filed against CPD dropped 50 percent from 2009 to 2010, and in lawsuits involving payouts under \$100,000, the City's liability costs were reduced by more than \$7 million.**

The Police Department's decision to fight litigation has clearly helped save taxpayers money, and consequently, I-LAW is calling on Mayor Emanuel to adopt the same aggressive lawsuit-fighting policy for all City departments and agencies.

"Chicago could send a clear message to some personal injury lawyers and potential plaintiffs who are merely looking for 'jackpot justice' by demonstrating that lawsuits will be fought aggressively and not quickly settled," said Akin. "The longer the City fails to act on this important issue, the longer potential plaintiffs and aggressive personal injury lawyers will continue to target city taxpayers' pockets with frivolous lawsuits against the City."

To compile its report, "Chicago: The City That Settles," I-LAW analyzed City Law Department documents, which show that combining judgments and settlements, costs and fees and outside legal counsel costs, the City of Chicago spent nearly \$85 million in 2010.

For a nearby comparison, the City of Naperville, which has a population of 141,853, spent \$15,375 on judgments and settlements and outside counsel in 2010, which means **the City of Chicago, which has 18 times the population of Naperville, spent over 5,528 times what Naperville spent on litigation costs last year.**

Akin added, "The fact that the City of Chicago is sued so often should not be a surprise, because Cook County courts are notorious magnets for frivolous lawsuits and have a reputation as a 'plaintiffs' paradise.' Businesses and individuals are targeted with harassing lawsuits all the time in Cook County courts, and the City of Chicago is clearly viewed as a deep-pocketed easy target.

"Mayor Rahm Emanuel should be applauded for aggressively trying to identify places where he can cut the budget. But with a new lawsuit coming in nearly each and every day on average, he should work quickly to shed the City's costly reputation as 'The City That Settles.'"

A 2010 report from Harris Interactive ranked Cook County the worst local jurisdiction for legal fairness in the country. Cook County was also recently ranked as the nation's fifth-worst "Judicial Hellhole" in a 2010 report from the American Tort Reform Association. For more information on the "Chicago: The City That Settles" report and I-LAW's efforts to restore common sense and fairness to Cook County courts, visit I-LAW's website at www.ILLawsuitAbuseWatch.org.

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Illinois Lawsuit Abuse Watch (I-LAW) is a grassroots watchdog group of concerned citizens, community leaders and small business people dedicated to educating the public about the widespread costs of lawsuit abuse. I-LAW has more than 20,000 supporters throughout Illinois. Anyone interested in becoming a supporter of I-LAW or learning more about stopping lawsuit abuse in Illinois can visit www.ILLawsuitAbuseWatch.org.