

Consumer Advocates Press Congress on Access to Justice

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Washington, D.C. - Nearly 125 consumer advocates from around the country will meet with their members of Congress on Wednesday, November 15, 2017 as part of Consumer Justice Lobby Day, sponsored by the National Consumer Law Center and the National Association of Consumer Advocates.

Among other issues, advocates will focus on:

Forced arbitration: Last month, Congress blocked the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's rule that would have stopped financial giants like Wells Fargo and Equifax from preventing people who were cheated from joining together to have their day in court. The fight over the rule and the outrage over Congress's action have galvanized people to push for reform.

"Congress should pass the Arbitration Fairness Act that would bar big business from using fine-print contracts to strip consumers, workers and small businesses of their day in court, said Ira Rheingold, executive director of the National Association of Consumer Advocates. "The public court system should be available to all, including consumers cheated by big banks and payday lenders, employees sexually harassed at work, students defrauded by for-profit schools, older Americans mistreated at nursing homes, or small businesses undermined by unfair competition tactics."

Legal services funding: President Trump has proposed to eliminate all funding for the Legal Services Corporation (LSC). LSC funds civil legal aid programs in all 50 states, in rural and urban areas, and for military personnel and veterans. The U.S. House of Representatives has passed an appropriation bill that cuts funding and would deny access to justice to 400,000 Americans, but the Senate package would protect LSC.

"Civil legal aid ensures that all in America have access to the justice system no matter how much money a person has," said Rich Dubois, executive director of the National Consumer Law Center. "Access to justice is a bedrock principle of our nation with strong bipartisan support. Civil legal-aid services supports that basic tenet for all in America."

Consumer protection: Advocates will also push for strong consumer protection, including reforms in the area of credit reporting and abusive debt collection as well as a strong and independent Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

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The National Association of Consumer Advocates (NACA) is a nonprofit association of private and public sector attorneys, legal services attorneys, law professors, and law students whose primary focus is the protection and representation of consumers. NACA is actively engaged in promoting a fair and open marketplace that forcefully protects the rights of consumers, particularly those of modest means.

Since 1969, the nonprofit National Consumer Law Center® (NCLC®) has worked for consumer justice and economic security for low-income and other disadvantaged people, including older adults, in the U.S. through its expertise in policy analysis and advocacy, publications, litigation, expert witness services, and training. www.nclc.org