



## PR with Principles

### SPIN Project e-newsletter #12: April 2005

Welcome to the SPIN Project's e-newsletter, our monthly compendium of news, notes, and ideas.

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Talking Points: Key Messages on Tort Reform

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Congress is in session and moving on important issues. Last month we brought you talking points on Social Security reform and Judicial nominations; this month we focus on tort reform. What you'll find below are media messages in our tried-and-true Problem/ Solution/ Action model to help you if your organization decides to take a position on these important issues.

Tort Reform:

#### Background

President Bush's constant attacks on what he calls "junk lawsuits" were a key part of his 2004 campaign strategy, and a Republican-sponsored bill to move class-action lawsuits from state courts to the federal judiciary recently passed in the Senate. Yet this bill addressed only a single, narrowly-defined issue, and the larger question of tort reform has yet to come before the Congress. Here's why our Congressional representatives need to make sure that any reform protects the rights of all Americans to seek justice for wrongs done to them:

#### Problem

President Bush's plan for "tort reform" would take away rights from ordinary Americans who have been harmed by the negligence of corporations, environmental contamination, defective products or dangerous working conditions. And his plan would do nothing to address the real issues at the core of many lawsuits -- corporate responsibility, environmental protections, or healthcare for all Americans. These efforts to weaken and limit access to the legal system are undemocratic.

#### Solution

Our civil justice system has protected the rights of Americans for more than two centuries, working in the public interest to compel corporations to make safer products, improve workplace safety, clean up the environment and improve the quality of health care. Our system of law, and the attorneys who help individuals and businesses seek justice for redress of injuries, are essential for protecting Americans against the powerful few -- whether those with power are corporations, individuals, or government.

Action

Tell President Bush and Congress that you won't stand for them taking away your rights to legal protections. We must preserve the rights of all Americans to have their day in court and seek justice under law.

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The SPIN Project's 2005 Progressive Editorial Calendar: April Highlights

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A quick reminder of what's coming up in April for your news-hooking pleasure:

April 15 Tax Day -- Let's use this date to make the case for the role government has to play -- what do our tax dollars fund? And let's use the day for accountability -- which corporations are shirking their public responsibilities with giant tax breaks?

April 22 Earth Day -- An important day to highlight environmental health. Can also be a useful time for environmental and health groups to build relationships with elected officials, as they may be more open to hearing from you/meeting with you around this date.

April 24 Passover

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Save the Date: The Seventh Annual SPIN Academy: August 17-21, 2005

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The Seventh Annual SPIN Academy will be held August 17-21, 2005 in Petaluma, CA. The SPIN Academy is our signature training event, bringing together more than sixty activists from across the country for five days of intensive communications training with SPIN Project staff and a wide assortment of guest trainers amid the rustic charms of Walker Creek Ranch in Marin County. More information on the Academy can be found at <http://www.spinproject.org/whatwedo/academy.html>.

Applications for the 2005 event will be opening in early June.

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That's it for this issue of the SPIN Project e-newsletter. Please feel free to forward any of this information to anyone you think might be interested -- we'd greatly appreciate it.

Thanks,

The SPIN Project Staff

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