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Congress Intends To Destroy Your Rights And Hopes You Won't Notice

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JOSHUA ROBERTS / REUTERS

If you're wondering why Republicans in Congress seem disturbingly complacent about the [unhinged](#) President and the exploding Watergate-level (or worse) constitutional crises starting to brew, check out [the February 15 Full Frontal show](#) on TBS. As host Samantha Bee explains, while people focus their outrage on big ticket offenses like Russian interference with our elections, Congress is, as we speak, quietly destroying multiple Obama-era public protections. It's a [Koch-organized](#) effort that has Republicans in Congress, as she puts it, going "hog wild" passing new laws to harm the public's health, safety and economic security. For example, one new law allows "coal companies to dump debris into nearby streams. Who the f*%# asked for that?"

No one. Nor did we send politicians to Washington to rig the civil courts against everyday Americans, or strip away legal rights guaranteed by state and local governments. Yet just a couple hours before *Full Frontal* aired, the House Judiciary Committee finished-up a [day-long session](#), which it began and ended by voting out two bills that would do just that - demolish our legal rights.

The Republican Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee – a committee which, in 1974, was a distinguished institution that protected the nation by impeaching Richard Nixon with a bi-partisan vote – spent most of yesterday swatting away Democrats' attempts to refocus the committee on urgent issues under their jurisdiction. ([Just watch for awhile.](#)) Then, the Republican majority voted out two anti-civil justice bills that no voters asked them to pass. Even small businesses have [made it repeatedly clear](#) that these are non-issues for them. They appear to be important only to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and paid business lobbyists, and a small number of the Chamber's super-rich industry members who have liability exposure for harming the public, and [who pay the Chamber](#) (in some cases) millions of dollars to lobby for them.

Democrats on the committee, led by the indefatigable ranking member, Rep. John Conyers (D-MI), who is the last remaining member of the Nixon impeachment committee, voted “no” on each of these bills. They did so because each one would endanger the health, safety and economic security of hard-working Americans. One bill (H.R. 906) would present extreme hardship to asbestos victims and their families, violating their privacy and delaying or denying legitimate claims so that dying victims – many of whom are Navy vets exposed while working on ships – are never compensated. Indeed, this bill is strongly opposed by veterans groups, as well as consumer, privacy, occupational safety and health groups, and a huge list of actual victims (none of whom support this bill). You can find those substantial letters of opposition [here](#).

The second bill (H.R. 985) would, as over 70 consumer, labor, legal and environmental groups [put it](#),

[O]bliterate class actions in America. It was introduced less than a week ago. The fact that the Committee would even consider such sweeping, reckless legislation without holding a single hearing is an outrage....

Class action lawsuits are among the most important tools to enable harmed, cheated and violated individuals and small businesses to hold large corporations and institutions accountable and deter future misconduct. H.R. 985 would annihilate that tool.

Strongly opposing this bill are over 120 civil rights organizations, as well as disability groups, legal scholars and small businesses.

Incredibly, just two weeks ago this same committee voted out other harmful anti-civil justice measures, which again, no one asked for except gigantic business lobbies. So to parrot Sam Bee's question, "Who the f*%# asked for all of these bills?," I think we know.

Big corporations that injure, cheat, defraud, violate and otherwise harm people, do not want to be held accountable in court. It's pretty simple. But consumer, civil rights, environmental, labor, legal, and a range of other public interest organizations are pushing back. They represent the public's strong belief that large companies would cut corner and risk the public's safety and economic security if corporate liability and accountability were weakened, as each of these bill would do.

Woke America, these "under the radar" issues need your attention. Time to add them to the long list of things that need "resisting."