



## **American Tort Reform Association**

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### **Statement of the American Tort Reform Association (ATRA) Honoring the Memory of Bill Summers**

Bill Summers, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Rio Grande Valley Partnership, a regional chamber of commerce that promotes the four southern most counties of Texas, died from cancer the evening of Monday, November 30<sup>th</sup>, while receiving treatment at M. D. Anderson Cancer and Tumor Institute in Houston.

Ralph Wayne, Chairman Emeritus of ATRA said, "Bill Summers represents the epitome of what one lone individual can accomplish through his or her respectability, honesty, and dedicated efforts, regardless of the obstacles one faces." Wayne, who worked with Summers in the Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse (CALA) groups and at the Texas Civil Justice League for nearly 20 years, found Bill to be "a friend you could trust in the darkest of days, and the best of times. He never wavered when charging down the field toward the known goal; challenges were just items to be handled, and he did handle them so very well. We will all miss him more than we can possibly imagine today. I have not only lost a devoted and tireless worker for our vital issues, but, more importantly, I have lost a dear, devoted friend who is irreplaceable. Our hearts and prayers go out to his wonderful wife, Jo, and their family."

In recent years, Bill received accolades and awards from many organizations, including ATRA, the Texas Civil Justice League, the Texas Department of Transportation, and the City of Weslaco. Additionally, he was a Congressional appointee to the Good Neighbor Environmental Board and a Presidential appointee to the White House for a national conference on Travel and Tourism.

ATRA President Tiger Joyce said, "Bill was a leader in the Rio Grande Valley, his state, and in the civil justice reform community. After recognizing the inherent surfacing dangers of "lawsuit abuse" in the Rio Grande Valley nearly 20 years ago, this champion of tort reform began organizing a group of citizens from all walks of life. They adopted the name CALA and grew into a powerful political force, first in the four Rio Grande Valley counties and then spreading like a raging prairie wildfire. Today, over 25,000 Texas citizens support 5 CALA organizations in Texas, alone, and similar groups are operating successfully in 10 other states. All these groups, supported by ATRA, work for equity and fairness in our nation's civil justice system."

ATRA was honored to have Bill and his lovely wife, Jo, at the recent ATRA meeting in Las Vegas on Monday, November 9<sup>th</sup>, when the organization presented a special award to Bill for his outstanding contributions in planting the seeds that developed the CALA organizations as we all know them today. Over 200 members of ATRA and over 40 CALA members from throughout the nation were present to pay tribute to Bill for his loyalty and unique, tireless contributions to the CALA movement he conceived.