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## Stone Consumer Protection Bill Passes Key Policy Committee

### *Legislation Restricts Companies from Hiding Information about Dangerous Products through Secret Legal Agreements*

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SACRAMENTO—The Assembly Privacy and Consumer Protection Committee has passed Assembly Bill 899 by Assemblymember Mark Stone (D-Monterey Bay). The consumer protection measure restricts civil litigants, usually large companies, from using secret settlements and other legal agreements as a way to hide information about ongoing dangers to consumers.

“People should have access to information that could help them make decisions about how to protect themselves and their families. As long as companies can continue to hide ongoing dangers to public health and safety that are discovered during the course of litigation, our constituents will continue to be harmed by products that they mistakenly expect to be safe. With today’s vote, we are saying that California is ready to join the eleven states have already enacted these necessary, basic consumer protections,” said Stone.

AB 889 would prohibit any order or agreement that conceals evidence of a danger to public health and safety, unless a court finds that the interest in secrecy outweighs the public interest in disclosure. Florida, Louisiana, Texas, Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina, Nevada, Oregon, South Carolina, Washington, and Montana have already enacted similar “sunshine in litigation” protections. In the 27 years since the first such law took effect, there has been no evidence that these measures have discouraged settlements, as opponents have claimed.

Protective orders and secrecy agreements have hidden numerous public dangers that have resulted in numerous injuries and deaths, including defective car tires, malfunctioning car ignition and airbags, collapsing car seatbacks, illegally shortened guard rails, explosive fertilizers, strangling window shade cords, and defective rifle triggers.

In April, the measure passed the Assembly Judiciary Committee on a party line vote of 8-3.

The measure next goes to the Assembly Floor for consideration of the full Assembly body.

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