



**For Immediate Release
September 16, 2004**

**Contact: Scott McCullers (CPMV) 202.251.4957
Doug Larkin (ADAO) 202.391.1546
Michael Bowker (AVO) 530.621.1050**

Asbestos Victims Groups United in Their Strong Opposition to the Asbestos Trust Fund

Washington - Three of the nation's leading asbestos victims organizations, The Committee to Protect Mesothelioma Victims (CPMV), Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization (ADAO), and Asbestos Victims Organization (AVO) have joined to express concerns about the latest asbestos litigation reform proposal exchanged between Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist and Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle.

The two leaders have been exchanging proposals since legislation to create an asbestos trust fund died in April and negotiations to revive the bill ended in May. Both men have made it known that they would like to reach a deal before Congress adjourns for the year. The most recent proposal, offered by Senator Daschle, makes significant concessions to demands from asbestos companies and insurers on issues of funding, pending cases, start-up funding, and so called Level VII claimants.

"Fighting asbestos related diseases is a tough and painful battle, and innocent victims are running out of time," said Linda Reinstein, Executive Director for ADAO. "We are opposed to Senator Daschle's counter offer as it fails to address the most basic levels of protection and fairness for asbestos victims, many of whom have lost their jobs, their homes, and their lives. Americans deserve legislation that prevents asbestos exposure, provides adequate compensation, and gives current and future victims a fighting chance."

"I think right now there is more interest in getting something done than doing something right," said CPMV Chair Sue Vento, whose husband Congressman Bruce Vento died from mesothelioma four years ago. "The trust fund is clearly inadequate and the awards will be insufficient to cover most people's medical expenses and loss of income, not to mention the loss of a beloved family member." Vento, who is employed by AFL-CIO affiliate Education Minnesota, echoed AFL-CIO Legislative Director Bill Samuel's comment that, "We're moving in the wrong direction...If we can't pay for [all claims], it's not wise to move forward."

AVO Executive Director Michael Bowker added that the whole trust fund concept "falls far short on research, tracking and treatment for asbestos diseases and it fails to educate the American public about the dangers of asbestos." Bowker, who is also the author of *Fatal Deception: The Terrifying True Story of How Asbestos is Killing America* explained that tens of thousands of Americans die each year from asbestos related diseases and that the death toll will likely continue for the foreseeable future because asbestos is still widely used in the U.S.

"Just last week we marked the third anniversary of 9/11," noted Bowker. "What many people don't realize is that the death toll from that horrific incident will keep climbing years into the future because thousands of police, firefighters, and others who were at the scene were all exposed to asbestos when the towers fell."

Bowker called attention to recent studies conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and the General Accounting Office which have shown that first responders and others on the scene were significantly exposed to dust, airborne toxins and pollutants unleashed by the collapsed buildings. "I think we do a disservice to those who risked their lives if we are not extremely careful about how we address this problem."

"We all agree that some changes to the system are necessary," concluded Vento. "But we can't forget that asbestos victims are the injured party here. No matter what we do, our first priority should be them and not the companies who caused this in the first place."

About the Committee to Protect Mesothelioma Victims

The Committee to Protect Mesothelioma Victims (CPMV) was formed shortly after Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) effectively ended negotiation with organized labor and others earlier this year by announcing his plan to remove asbestos litigation from the nation's court system.

We represent mesothelioma victims and their families all across America who will be adversely affected by asbestos litigation reform legislation. Our goal is to ensure that past, present, and future victims of this fatal asbestos-related cancer get the compensation, treatment, and justice they deserve. For more information visit www.asbestotruth.org

About Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization

Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization (ADAO) was founded by asbestos victims and their families. We seek to give asbestos victims a united voice to help ensure that their rights are fairly represented and protected. This includes their right to medical research and treatments aimed at early detection, prevention and a cure for asbestos related diseases; their right to file suit based on the merits of their individual asbestos related injustice; and the right to fair compensation. As an independent organization, Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization will not be influenced by outside sources such as drug companies, law firms or companies that manufacture or use asbestos. ADAO is fully funded through voluntary contributions and staffed by volunteers. For more information, visit www.asbestosdiseaseawareness.org

About Asbestos Victims Organization

AVO is a nonprofit, 501 (c) (3) organization dedicated to providing assistance to asbestos victims and their families. Our mission is to help fight for health and justice. We hope you'll take a moment and get to know us and hopefully join in what we're going to accomplish. Please visit our website at www.avoglobal.org.