It's Time to Curb Nuclear Verdicts

Nuclear verdicts are jury verdicts of $10 million or more. They are extreme, unpredictable, and often heavily influenced by bad actors. These verdicts can drive up the costs of goods and services for families, negatively impact the cost and availability of insurance for businesses, and undermine the fairness and predictability of the justice system.

Legislative action in other states has proven productive in curbing nuclear verdicts. It's time Illinois follows suit and works to restore confidence, fairness, and predictability in jury awards.

Nuclear Verdicts in Illinois

- Illinois ranks 5th among the Top 10 States by Cumulative Nuclear Verdicts.
- Cook County courts produced almost 80% of Illinois' nuclear verdicts during a 13-year period.
- $2 billion dollars were awarded in Illinois between 2013-2022, with the median payment being $20 million.

The Real Cost of Nuclear Verdicts

On Businesses

Nuclear verdicts can threaten the viability of a business and create insurability problems for an entire industry. More nuclear verdicts also mean more nuclear settlements, as plaintiffs' lawyers make higher demands, and businesses agree to settlement levels that would have otherwise been rejected as unreasonable. This contributes to the rising cost of lawsuits and can inhibit job growth and economic development opportunities.

On the Justice System

In many cases, there is no objective way to place a monetary value on the injuries claimed by the plaintiff, so plaintiffs' lawyers use tactics that manipulate juror behavior and arbitrarily inflate damages. Lawyers will suggest that jurors award a specific, exorbitant amount of damages or apply a method for calculating damages that will produce a nuclear verdict, knowing that jurors will often rely on these suggestions.

Outside the courtroom, plaintiffs' law firms and "lead generating" companies advertise touting extraordinary verdicts which shape potential jurors' views of appropriate compensation.

On Communities

Nuclear verdicts harm communities by increasing the costs of everyday items for hardworking families and making it more difficult for those who actually need compensation to receive it. The prospect of a nuclear verdict makes it more difficult to fairly resolve claims, leading to unnecessary litigation and appeals for businesses. This litigation inflation trickles down to residents and contributes to the increasing costs of everyday items and services—including food, housing, and medical care—and the cost of automobile, homeowners, and commercial insurance.