

For Immediate Release  
July 14, 1999

**Michael J. Bidart is Named 1999 Trial Lawyer of the Year Finalist  
Trial Lawyers for Public Justice Recognize Work on Behalf of Consumers**

**\$120.5 Million Jury Verdict Against Aetna Cited**

Michael J. Bidart, a partner at the Claremont firm of Shernoff, Bidart, Darras & Dillon, has been named a finalist for the Trial Lawyers for Public Justice 1999 Trial Lawyer of the Year Award.

Mr. Bidart, an expert in insurance bad faith litigation on behalf of consumers, was nominated from a field of nationally recognized candidates for his landmark \$120.5 million trial victory in favor of a cancer victim's spouse [Goodrich v. Aetna U.S. Healthcare, San Bernardino Superior Court, Case No. RCV020499]. The jury verdict, handed down in January, is the largest verdict ever rendered against an HMO and helped to renew the debate on a Patients' Bill of Rights that includes the right-to-sue your HMO.

David Goodrich, a deputy district attorney, died from a rare form of stomach cancer after a 2 ½ year ordeal trying to get Aetna to approve cancer treatment recommended by the health plan's own doctors. Mr. Bidart tried the case alone against Aetna's team of corporate and outside lawyers, producing 2000 pages of written discovery and attending 76 depositions over the 3 ½ years of litigation. After a 2 ½ month long trial, the jury awarded Goodrich's widow damages for her husband's unpaid medical bills and nearly \$3.8 million for loss of companionship and consortium. Further finding that Aetna acted with malice, fraud, and oppression, the jury awarded an additional \$116 million in punitive damages. The jury also found Aetna's conduct had substantially shortened the life of David Goodrich.

A native of Chino, Mr. Bidart was admitted to the California Bar in 1974. Initially, he practiced general litigation, criminal, and insurance law. In 1986, he joined William M. Shernoff who had established a national reputation handling insurance bad faith litigation on behalf of consumers. Presently, Mr. Bidart leads the firm's HMO Litigation and Property and Casualty Departments. As counsel to policyholders, Mr. Bidart has won dozens of jury verdicts and settlements, including the recovery of more than \$300 million for victims of the 1994 Northridge earthquake. A particular focus of his practice has been in the area of healthcare, challenging cutting-edge policy provisions and exclusions.

The nationally prestigious Trial Lawyer of the Year Award is bestowed annually upon the trial lawyer or lawyers who have made the greatest contribution to the public interest by trying or settling a precedent-setting case. This year, there are eight finalists nominated for their work on precedent-setting cases addressing a broad range of social issues, including civil rights, environmental protection, consumer rights, and human rights.

Founded in 1982, Trial Lawyers for Public Justice is a national public interest law firm dedicated to using trial lawyers skills and resources to pursue precedent-setting and socially significant litigation.

The 1999 Trial Lawyer of the Year winner will be announced July 20 at the Trial Lawyers for Public Justice Foundation's Annual Party and Awards Dinner in San Francisco.