

ENJOINED
FILED
SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY
SUPERIOR COURT

2014 APR -2 PM 12: 28

CLERK OF THE COURT

BY: _____
DEPUTY CLERK

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13 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
14 COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
15 UNLIMITED CIVIL JURISDICTION
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19 WHITNEY R. LEEMAN, PH.D.,

20 Plaintiff,

21 v.

22 THERM-O-WEB, INC.; and DOES 1-150,
23 inclusive,

24 Defendant.

CGC-14-538383

Case No. _____

**COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES
AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

(Health & Safety Code § 25249.5 *et seq.*)

1 NATURE OF THE ACTION

2 1. This Complaint is a representative action brought by plaintiff WHITNEY R.
3 LEEMAN, PH.D. in the public interest of the citizens of the State of California to enforce the
4 People’s right to be informed of the health hazards caused by exposures to
5 di(2-ethylhexyl)phthalate (“DEHP”), a toxic chemical found in the vinyl/PVC handles of tote
6 bags with sold by defendants in California.

7 2. By this Complaint, plaintiff seeks to remedy defendants’ continuing failure to
8 warn California citizens and other individuals about the risks of exposure to DEHP present in
9 the vinyl/PVC handles of tote bags manufactured, distributed, sold, and offered for sale or use
10 to consumers and other individuals throughout the State of California.

11 3. Detectable levels of DEHP are found in and on the vinyl/PVC handles of tote
12 bags that defendants manufacture, distribute, and offer for sale to consumers and other
13 individuals throughout the State of California.

14 4. Under the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, codified at
15 Health and Safety Code section 25249.6 *et seq.* (“Proposition 65”), “[n]o person in the course of
16 doing business shall knowingly and intentionally expose any individual to a chemical known to
17 the state to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity without first giving clear and reasonable
18 warning to such individual” Health & Safety Code § 25249.6.

19 5. Pursuant to Proposition 65, on October 24, 2003, California identified and listed
20 DEHP as a chemical known to cause birth defects and other reproductive harm. DEHP became
21 subject to the “clear and reasonable warning” requirements of the act one year later on October
22 24, 2004. Cal. Code Regs. tit. 27, § 27001(c); Health & Safety Code §§ 25249.8 &
23 25249.10(b).

24 6. Defendants manufacture, distribute, import, sell, and offer for sale without health
25 hazard warnings in California, tote bags with vinyl/PVC handles containing DEHP, including,
26 but not limited to, the *Mimi Impression Urban Stamp Tote, Style: M08.04, (UPC #0 00943*
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1 00804 0). All such tote bags with vinyl/PVC handles containing DEHP are referred to
2 collectively hereinafter as “PRODUCTS.”

3 7. Defendants’ failure to warn consumers and other individuals in California of the
4 health hazards associated with exposures to DEHP in conjunction with defendants’ sales of the
5 PRODUCTS are violations of Proposition 65, and subject defendants, and each of them, to
6 enjoinder of such conduct as well as civil penalties for each violation. Health & Safety Code
7 § 25249.7(a) & (b)(1).

8 8. For defendants’ violations of Proposition 65, plaintiff seeks preliminary and
9 permanent injunctive relief to compel defendants to provide purchasers or users of the
10 PRODUCTS with the required warning regarding the health hazards associated with exposures
11 to DEHP. Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(a).

12 9. Pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 25249.7(b), plaintiff also seeks civil
13 penalties against defendant for their violations of Proposition 65.

14 **PARTIES**

15 10. Plaintiff WHITNEY R. LEEMAN, PH.D. is a citizen of the State of California
16 who is dedicated to protecting the health of California citizens through the elimination or
17 reduction of toxic exposures from consumer products; and he brings this action in the public
18 interest pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 25249.7(d).

19 11. Defendant THERM-O-WEB, INC. (“THERM-O-WEB”) is a person in the course
20 of doing business within the meaning of Health and Safety Code sections 25249.6 and
21 25249.11.

22 12. THERM-O-WEB manufactures, imports, distributes, sells, and/or offers the
23 PRODUCTS for sale or use in California, or implies by its conduct that it manufactures, imports,
24 distributes, sells, and/or offers the PRODUCTS for sale or use in California.

25 13. Defendants DOES 1-50 (“MANUFACTURER DEFENDANTS”) are each a
26 person in the course of doing business within the meaning of Health and Safety Code sections
27 25249.6 and 25249.11.

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1 instances of wrongful conduct occurred, and continue to occur, in this county, and/or because
2 DEFENDANTS conducted, and continue to conduct, business in San Francisco with respect to
3 the PRODUCTS.

4 22. The California Superior Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to
5 California Constitution Article VI, section 10, which grants the Superior Court “original
6 jurisdiction in all causes except those given by statute to other trial courts.” The statute under
7 which this action is brought does not specify any other basis of subject matter jurisdiction.

8 23. The California Superior Court has jurisdiction over DEFENDANTS based on
9 plaintiff’s information and good faith belief that each defendant is a person, firm, corporation or
10 association that is a citizen of the State of California, has sufficient minimum contacts in the
11 State of California, and/or otherwise purposefully avails itself of the California market.
12 DEFENDANTS’ purposeful availment renders the exercise of personal jurisdiction by
13 California courts consistent with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.

14 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

15 **(Violation of Proposition 65 - Against All Defendants)**

16 24. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference, as if fully set forth herein,
17 Paragraphs 1 through 23, inclusive.

18 25. In enacting Proposition 65, in the preamble to the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic
19 Enforcement Act of 1986, the People of California expressly declared their right “[t]o be
20 informed about exposures to chemicals that cause cancer, birth defects, or other reproductive
21 harm.”

22 26. Proposition 65 states, “[n]o person in the course of doing business shall
23 knowingly and intentionally expose any individual to a chemical known to the state to cause
24 cancer or reproductive toxicity without first giving clear and reasonable warning to such
25 individual . . . ” Health & Safety Code § 25249.6.

26 27. On November 15, 2013, plaintiff served a sixty-day notice of violation, together
27 with the requisite certificate of merit, on THERM-O-WEB and certain requisite public
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1 enforcement agencies alleging that, as a result of DEFENDANTS' sales of the PRODUCTS
2 containing DEHP, purchasers and users in the State of California were being exposed to DEHP
3 resulting from their reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS, without the individual
4 purchasers and users first having been provided with a "clear and reasonable warning"
5 regarding the harms associated with such exposures, as required by Proposition 65.

6 28. DEFENDANTS manufacture, import, distribute, sell, and offer the PRODUCTS
7 for sale or use in violation of Health and Safety Code section 25249.6, and DEFENDANTS'
8 violations have continued beyond their receipt of plaintiff's sixty-day notice of violation.
9 DEFENDANTS' violations are ongoing and continuous in nature, and, as such, will continue in
10 the future.

11 29. After receiving plaintiff's sixty-day notice of violation, none of the appropriate
12 public enforcement agencies have commenced and diligently prosecuted a cause of action
13 against DEFENDANTS under Proposition 65 to enforce the alleged violations that are the
14 subject of plaintiff's notice of violation.

15 30. The PRODUCTS that DEFENDANTS manufacture, import, distribute, sell, and
16 offer for sale or use in California cause exposures to DEHP as a result of the reasonably
17 foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS. Such exposures caused by DEFENDANTS and endured by
18 consumers and other individuals in California are not exempt from the "clear and reasonable"
19 warning requirements of Proposition 65, yet DEFENDANTS provide no warning.

20 31. DEFENDANTS knew or should have known that the PRODUCTS they
21 manufacture, import, distribute, sell, and offer for sale or use in California contain DEHP.

22 32. DEHP is present in or on the PRODUCTS in such a way as to expose individuals
23 to DEHP through dermal contact, ingestion and/or inhalation during reasonably foreseeable use.

24 33. The normal and reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS has caused, and
25 continues to cause, consumer exposures to DEHP, as defined by title 27 of the California Code
26 of Regulations, section 25602(b).

1 2. That the Court, pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 25249.7(a),
2 preliminarily and permanently enjoin DEFENDANTS from manufacturing, distributing, or
3 offering the PRODUCTS for sale or use in California without first providing a “clear and
4 reasonable warning” in accordance with title 27 of the California Code of Regulations, section
5 25601 *et seq.*, regarding the harms associated with exposures DEHP;

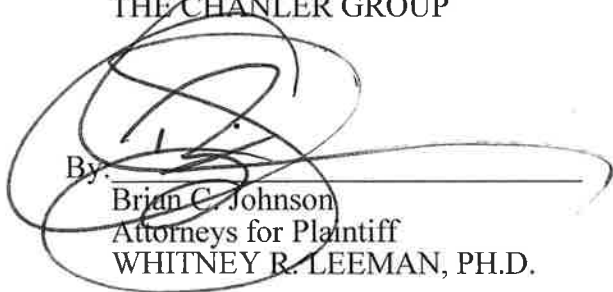
6 3. That the Court, Pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 25249.7(a), issue
7 preliminary and permanent injunctions mandating that DEFENDANTS recall all PRODUCTS
8 currently in the chain of commerce in California without a “clear and reasonable warning” as
9 defined by California Code of Regulations title 27, section 25601 *et seq.*;

10 4. That the Court grant plaintiff his reasonable attorneys’ fees and costs of suit; and

11 5. That the Court grant such other and further relief as may be just and proper.

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13 Dated: April 1, 2014

Respectfully Submitted,
THE CHANLER GROUP

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16 By: 
17 Brian C. Johnson
18 Attorneys for Plaintiff
19 WHITNEY R. LEEMAN, PH.D.