

1 Evan J. Smith, Esquire (SBN 242352)
2 Ryan P. Cardona, Esquire (SBN 302113)
3 BRODSKY & SMITH, LLC
4 9595 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 900
5 Beverly Hills, CA 90212
6 Telephone: (877) 534-2590
7 Facsimile: (310) 247-0160

8 *Attorneys for Plaintiff*

JUL 30 2013

MARGARET J. DOWNING

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

COUNTY OF ALAMEDA

RG18914799

10 EMA BELL,

11 Plaintiff,

12 vs.

13 HOME ESSENTIALS & BEYOND,
14 INC., TUESDAY MORNING, INC.,

15 Defendants.

Case No.:

**COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES AND
INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

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

16 Plaintiff Ema Bell ("Plaintiff"), by and through her attorneys, alleges the following cause
17 of action in the public interest of the citizens of the State of California.

18 **BACKGROUND OF THE CASE**

19 1. Plaintiff brings this representative action on behalf of all California citizens to
20 enforce relevant portions of Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, codified
21 at the Health and Safety Code § 25249.5 et seq. ("Proposition 65"), which reads, in relevant part,
22 "[n]o person in the course of doing business shall knowingly and intentionally expose any
23 individual to a chemical known to the state to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity without first
24 giving clear and reasonable warning to such individual ...". Health & Safety Code § 25249.6.

25 2. This complaint is a representative action brought by Plaintiff in the public interest
26 of the citizens of the State of California to enforce the People's right to be informed of the health
27 hazards caused by exposure to di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP), a toxic chemical found in
28 Home Essentials & Beyond wine bottle totes sold and/or distributed by defendants Home

1 Essentials & Beyond, Inc. (“Home Essentials”) and Tuesday Morning, Inc. (“Tuesday Morning”)
2 (collectively, “Defendants”) in California.

3 3. DEHP is a harmful chemical known to the State of California to cause cancer and
4 reproductive toxicity. On January 1, 1988, the State of California listed DEHP as a chemical
5 known to the State to cause cancer and DEHP has come under the purview of Proposition 65
6 regulations since that time. Cal. Code Regs. Tit. 27, § 27001(c); Health & Safety Code §§
7 25249.8 & 25249.10(b). On October 24, 2003, the State of California listed DEHP as a chemical
8 known to cause reproductive toxicity.

9 4. Proposition 65 requires all businesses with ten (10) or more employees that
10 operate within California or sell products therein to comply with Proposition 65 regulations.
11 Included in such regulations is the requirement that businesses must label any product containing
12 a Proposition 65-listed chemical with a “clear and reasonable” warning before “knowingly and
13 intentionally” exposing any person to it.

14 5. Proposition 65 allows for civil penalties of up to \$2,500.00 per day per violation
15 to be imposed upon defendants in a civil action for violations of Proposition 65. Health & Safety
16 Code § 25249.7(b). Proposition 65 also allows for any court of competent jurisdiction to enjoin
17 the actions of a defendant which “violate or threaten to violate” the statute. Health & Safety
18 Code § 25249.7.

19 6. Plaintiff alleges that Defendants distribute, sell and/or offer for sale in California,
20 without a requisite exposure warning, Home Essentials & Beyond wine bottle totes (the
21 “Products”) that expose persons to DEHP.

22 7. Defendants’ failure to warn consumers and other individuals in California of the
23 health hazards associated with exposure to DEHP in conjunction with the sale and/or distribution
24 of the Products is a violation of Proposition 65 and subjects Defendants to the enjoinder and
25 civil penalties described herein.

26 8. Plaintiff seeks civil penalties against Defendants for their violations of
27 Proposition 65 in accordance with Health and Safety Code § 25249.7(b).

28

1 9. Plaintiff also seeks injunctive relief, preliminarily and permanently, requiring
2 Defendants to provide purchasers or users of the Products with required warnings related to the
3 dangers and health hazards associated with exposure to DEHP pursuant to Health and Safety
4 Code § 25249.7(a).

5 **PARTIES**

6 10. Plaintiff is a citizen of the State of California acting in the interest of the general
7 public to promote awareness of exposures to toxic chemicals in products sold in California and
8 to improve human health by reducing hazardous substances contained in such items. He brings
9 this action in the public interest pursuant to Health and Safety Code § 25249.7(d).

10 11. Defendant Home Essentials, through its business, effectively manufactures,
11 imports, distributes, sells, and/or offers the Products for sale or use in the State of California, or
12 it implies by its conduct that it manufactures, imports, distributes, sells, and/or offers the
13 Products for sale or use in the State of California. Plaintiff alleges that defendant Home
14 Essentials is a “person” in the course of doing business within the meaning of Health & Safety
15 Code sections 25249.6 and 25249.11.

16 12. Defendant Tuesday Morning, through its business, effectively manufactures,
17 imports, distributes, sells, and/or offers the Products for sale or use in the State of California, or
18 it implies by its conduct that it manufactures, imports, distributes, sells, and/or offers the
19 Products for sale or use in the State of California. Plaintiff alleges that defendant Tuesday
20 Morning is a “person” in the course of doing business within the meaning of Health & Safety
21 Code sections 25249.6 and 25249.11.

22 **VENUE AND JURISDICTION**

23 13. Venue is proper in the County of Alameda because one or more of the instances
24 of wrongful conduct occurred, and continue to occur in this county and/or because Defendants
25 conducted, and continue to conduct, business in the County of Alameda with respect to the
26 Products.

27 14. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to California Constitution
28 Article VI, § 10, which grants the Superior Court original jurisdiction in all causes except those

1 given by statute to other trial courts. Health and Safety Code § 25249.7 allows for the
2 enforcement of violations of Proposition 65 in any Court of competent jurisdiction; therefore,
3 this Court has jurisdiction over this lawsuit.

4 15. This Court has jurisdiction over Defendants because Defendants are either a
5 citizen of the State of California, have sufficient minimum contacts with the State of California,
6 are registered with the California Secretary of State as foreign corporations authorized to do
7 business in the State of California, and/or has otherwise purposefully availed itself of the
8 California market. Such purposeful availment has rendered the exercise of jurisdiction by
9 California courts consistent and permissible with traditional notions of fair play and substantial
10 justice.

11 **SATISFACTION OF NOTICE REQUIREMENTS**

12 16. On March 5, 2018, Plaintiff gave notice of alleged violations of Health and Safety
13 Code § 25249.6 (the “Notice”) to Defendants concerning the exposure of California citizens to
14 DEHP contained in the Products without proper warning, subject to a private action to
15 Defendants and to the California Attorney General’s office and the offices of the County District
16 attorneys and City Attorneys for each city with a population greater than 750,000 persons
17 wherein the herein violations allegedly occurred.

18 17. The Notice complied with all procedural requirements of Proposition 65 including
19 the attachment of a Certificate of Merit affirming that Plaintiff’s counsel had consulted with at
20 least one person with relevant and appropriate expertise who reviewed relevant data regarding
21 DEHP exposure, and that counsel believed there was meritorious and reasonable cause for a
22 private action.

23 18. After receiving the Notice, and to Plaintiff’s best information and belief, none of
24 the noticed appropriate public enforcement agencies have commenced and diligently prosecuted
25 a cause of action against Defendants under Proposition 65 to enforce the alleged violations which
26 are the subject of Plaintiff’s notices of violation.

27 19. Plaintiff is commencing this action more than sixty (60) days from the date of the
28 Notice to Defendants, as required by law.

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

(By Plaintiff against Defendant for the Violation of Proposition 65)

20. Plaintiff hereby repeats and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 19 of this complaint as though fully set forth herein.

21. Defendants have, at all times mentioned herein, acted as a distributor and/or retailer of the Products.

22. The Products contain DEHP, a hazardous chemical found on the Proposition 65 list of chemicals known to be hazardous to human health.

23. The Products do not comply with the Proposition 65 warning requirements.

24. Plaintiff, based on her best information and belief, avers that at all relevant times herein, and at least since January 17, 2018, that Defendants have continued to knowingly and intentionally expose California users and consumers of the Products to DEHP without providing required warnings under Proposition 65.

25. The exposures that are the subject of the Notice result from the purchase, acquisition, handling and recommended use of the Product. Consequently, the primary route of exposure to these chemicals is through dermal absorption. Dermal absorption of DEHP can occur through direct skin contact when the wine tote is grasped or manipulated with bare hands. If the wine tote is stored or transported in a carrier, DEHP that leaches from the item may contaminate other articles contained within the carrier or storage area that are subsequently handled, worn, or consumed by the user. Finally, while mouthing of the item does not seem likely, some amount of exposure through ingestion can occur by touching the product with subsequent touching of the user's hand to mouth.

26. Plaintiff, based on her best information and belief, avers that such exposures will continue every day until clear and reasonable warnings are provided to Product purchasers and users or until this known toxic chemical is removed from the Product.

27. Defendants have knowledge that the normal and reasonably foreseeable use of the Product exposes individuals to DEHP, and Defendants intend that exposures to DEHP will occur

1 by their deliberate, non-accidental participation in the importation, distribution, sale and offering
2 of the Products to consumers in California

3 28. Plaintiff has engaged in good faith efforts to resolve the herein claims prior to this
4 Complaint.

5 29. Pursuant to Health and Safety Code § 25249.7(b), as a consequence of the above
6 described acts, Defendant is liable for a maximum civil penalty of \$2,500 per day per violation.

7 30. Pursuant to Health and Safety Code § 25249.7(a), this Court is specifically
8 authorized to grant injunctive relief in favor of Plaintiff and against Defendants.

9 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

10 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff demands judgment against Defendants and requests the
11 following relief:

- 12 A. That the court assess civil penalties against Defendant in the amount of
13 \$2,500 per day for each violation in accordance with Health and Safety
14 Code § 25249.7(b);
- 15 B. That the court preliminarily and permanently enjoin Defendant mandating
16 Proposition 65 compliant warnings on the Product;
- 17 C. That the court grant Plaintiff reasonable attorney's fees and costs of suit.
- 18 D. That the court grant any further relief as may be just and proper.

19
20 Dated: July 27, 2018

BRODSKY & SMITH, LLC

21 By: 
22 Evan J. Smith (SBN242352)
23 Ryan P. Cardona (SBN302113)
24 9595 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 900
25 Beverly Hills, CA 90212
26 Telephone: (877) 534-2590
27 Facsimile: (310) 247-0160

Attorneys for Plaintiff