

INTRODUCTION

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2 1. This Complaint is brought by Plaintiff, APS&EE, LLC (“Plaintiff”) in the public
3 interest of the citizens of the State of California, a representative action to enforce the People’s
4 right to be informed of the presence of lead (“Lead”), a chemical known to the State of
5 California to cause cancer and birth defects or other reproductive harm, in coffee mugs with
6 exterior decorations sold by Defendants.

7 2. The purpose of this Complaint is to remedy Defendants’ continuing failure to
8 warn California residents about the risk of exposure to the Lead in the coffee mugs
9 manufactured, distributed, sold, and/or offered for sale to consumers in California.

10 3. Defendants have and continue to manufacture, distribute, sell, and/or offer to sell
11 the 15oz coffee mug, 1709-6421, 9-332663-036111 (black with different colored beans
12 decoration). The products described in this paragraph shall hereinafter be referred to as the
13 “Products”.

14 4. Children and adults are exposed to the Lead when they use, touch, handle, play
15 with, repair, maintain, install, eat and/or drink from, the Products.

16 5. Hazardous levels of the Lead are found in the accessible surface areas of the
17 Products manufactured, distributed, sold, and/or offered for sale by Defendants to consumers in
18 California.

19 6. California Health and Safety Code section 25249.6 et seq. (“Proposition 65”)
20 provides in pertinent part: “[n]o person in the course of doing business shall knowingly and
21 intentionally expose any individual to a chemical known to the state to cause cancer or
22 reproductive toxicity without first giving clear and reasonable warning to such individual...”

23 7. Studies repeatedly conclude that exposure to the Lead is hazardous to the health
24 of children and adults. Children are especially vulnerable to the toxic effects of Lead.
25 Accordingly, California has listed the Lead as a chemical known to the state to cause cancer and
26 birth defects or other reproductive harm, and therefore subject to Proposition 65 warning
27 requirements.

28 8. Defendants have and continue to manufacture, distribute, sell, and/or offer to sell

1 the Products without the required warnings. Defendants’ conduct violates the warning
2 requirements of Proposition 65.

3 **PARTIES**

4 9. Plaintiff is an organization based in California acting in the public interest.
5 Plaintiff brings this action in the public interest pursuant to California Health and Safety Code
6 section 25249.7(d).

7 10. Defendant, JO-ANN STORES, LLC is a person in the course of doing business
8 within the meaning of California Health and Safety Code section 25249.11. JO-ANN STORES,
9 LLC manufactures, distributes, and/or sells the Products for sale and use in California.

10 11. DOES 1 through 100 are each a person in the course of doing business within the
11 meaning of California Health and Safety Code section 25249.11. DOES 1 through 100
12 manufacture, distribute, and/or sell the Products for sale and use in California. The true names of
13 DOES 1 through 100 are unknown to Plaintiff at this time. When their identities are discovered,
14 Plaintiff’s Complaint shall be amended to reflect their true names.

15 12. The defendants identified in paragraphs 10-11 shall collectively be referred to
16 herein as “Defendants”.

17 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

18 13. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to California Health and
19 Safety Code section 25249.7, which allows enforcement in any court of competent jurisdiction,
20 and pursuant to California Constitution Article VI, Section 10, because this lawsuit is based on a
21 cause not given by statute to other trial courts. Moreover, this action belongs in unlimited
22 jurisdiction since the amount in controversy exceeds \$25,000 and Plaintiff seeks permanent
23 injunctive relief.

24 14. This Court has jurisdiction over Defendants because each is a person, firm,
25 corporation, or association with sufficient minimum contacts in the State of California, or
26 otherwise purposefully avails itself to the California market as to render jurisdiction by the
27 California courts consistent with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.

28 15. Venue is proper in Los Angeles County Superior Court because one or more

1 occurrences of the wrongful conduct occurred, and continues to occur, in Los Angeles County,
2 and/or because Defendants conducted, and continue to conduct, business in this County with
3 respect to the Products.

4 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

5 **(Violations of Health & Safety Code Section 25249.6 et seq.)**

6 16. Plaintiff re-alleges and incorporates by reference, as if fully set forth herein,
7 Paragraphs 1 through 15, inclusive.

8 17. On March 1, 2021, Plaintiff served a Sixty-Day Notice of Violation with a
9 Certificate of Merit (the "Notice"), to JO-ANN STORES, LLC and the various public
10 enforcement agencies with respect to the Proposition 65 violations related to Lead in the
11 Products. In addition, on said date, in compliance with Health & Safety Code section 25249.7(d),
12 confidential factual information sufficient to establish the basis for the Certificate of Merit was
13 provided to the California Attorney General.

14 18. None of the public prosecutors with the authority to prosecute Proposition 65
15 violations has commenced and/or is diligently prosecuting the causes of action against
16 Defendants based on the claims asserted in Plaintiff's Notice.

17 19. By placing the Products into the stream of commerce, each Defendant is a person
18 in the course of doing business within the meaning of Health & Safety Code section 25249.11.

19 20. Defendants knew and intended that consumers, including children, will use,
20 touch, handle, play with, repair, maintain, install, eat and/or drink from, the Products.

21 21. Defendants knew that the Products contain Lead. Defendants, who are in the
22 business of marketing home goods such as ceramicware, also should have known or have
23 constructive knowledge that the Products contain Lead from widespread media coverage and/or
24 other channels of information concerning the presence of Lead in ceramicware.

25 22. Lead is a chemical listed by the State of California as known to cause cancer and
26 birth defects or other reproductive harm.

27 23. Defendants' Products contain sufficient quantities of the Lead such that
28 consumers, including children, who use, touch, handle, play with, repair, maintain, install, eat

1 and/or drink from the Products are exposed to unsafe levels of Lead. Lead is present in the
2 Products in such a way as to expose individuals to Lead, as exposure is defined by 27 CCR
3 section 25600.1(e): "...that results from a person's acquisition, purchase, storage, consumption,
4 or any reasonably foreseeable use..." Direct and indirect exposure occurs through inhalation,
5 ingestion and/or dermal contact during the reasonably foreseeable use of the Products.

6 24. Defendants knew or should have known that the reasonably foreseeable use of the
7 Products exposes individuals to Lead through inhalation, ingestion and/or dermal contact.

8 25. Defendants failed to provide a "clear and reasonable warning" to individuals in
9 the State of California who were or could become exposed to Lead during the reasonably
10 foreseeable use of the Products.

11 26. By committing the acts alleged in this Complaint, Defendants have violated
12 California Health & Safety Code section 25249.6 et seq. by knowingly and intentionally
13 exposing individuals to Lead without first giving clear and reasonable warnings to such
14 individuals regarding the toxicity of Lead.

15 27. As a result of Defendants' wrongful conduct, individuals in the State of California
16 have been exposed to Lead through the inhalation, ingestion and/or dermal contact during the
17 reasonably foreseeable use of the Products without a "clear and reasonable warning", and have
18 suffered and continue to suffer harm, each and every day since at least March 1, 2020.

19 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

20 **WHEREFORE**, Plaintiff prays for judgment against Defendants as follows:

21 1. That the Court, pursuant to California Health & Safety Code section 25249.7(b),
22 assess civil penalties against Defendants in the amount of \$2,500 per day for each violation
23 alleged herein;

24 2. That the Court, pursuant to California Health & Safety Code section 25249.7(a),
25 preliminarily and permanently enjoin Defendants from manufacturing, distributing, or offering
26 the Products for sale in California without providing "clear and reasonable warnings" as defined
27 by 27 CCR section 25601;

28 3. That the Court, pursuant to California Health & Safety Code section 25249.7(a),

1 order Defendants to take action to stop ongoing unwarned exposures to Lead resulting from use
2 of Products sold by Defendants;

3 4. That the Court, pursuant to California Code of Civil Procedure section 1021.5, or
4 any other applicable theory, grant Plaintiff's reasonable attorneys' fees and costs of suit; and

5 5. Such other and further relief as may be just and proper.

6
7 Dated: May 12, 2021

LAW OFFICES OF LUCAS T. NOVAK

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9 By: 

10 LUCAS T. NOVAK
11 Attorney for Plaintiff, APS&EE, LLC
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