

Ever since the anti-smoking campaign really took off, class action lawsuits have become a pretty big deal. It seems like almost every day, we hear about a different class action suit. We hear about class action suits against the tobacco industry, against the manufacturers of fire arms and malt liquor, and even against the Catholic Church. Nonetheless, there are many class action suits that we do not hear about.

Not hearing about class action suits wouldn't seem to be a problem for most people, but you have to wonder whether or not you have been named as a party to one. It is amazing how few people actually claim the status that they are entitled to in suits class action . For example, there was recently a class action suit against the recording industry where anyone who had bought a CD in the last several years was entitled to 10 dollars. The recording industry, you see, had been fixing prices on CDs. Therefore, if you had bought a CD recently, you are considered a victim of their illegal price-fixing.

Of all of the people who could have been involved in this class action suit - and I'm sure there were tens of thousands of them - only a small handful were. Most class action suits go this way, in fact. It is rare for them to be sufficiently publicized for most people to find out. Even when they do, people are often too lazy to get involved. The amount of time that it takes to get involved in class action suits, and the fairly small amount of money that tends to be rewarded, means that most people forget about them instead of taking the necessary steps to get their reward.

Nonetheless, in some ways class action suits are very important. Don't get me wrong - despite what you may have heard about the big tobacco lawsuits, class action suits very rarely do anything for the victims. The lawyer fees are so expensive, the litigation takes so long, and the industries are so well represented, that each member of a class action lawsuit generally stands to gain very little. Nevertheless, class action suits have a function that they serve in society. They punish industries for harmful or destructive activities. The tobacco industry knows not to market cigarettes to minors anymore, and to put sufficient warnings on each pack of cigarettes. That is an important development, if you ask me.