

# If Coffee Needs a Cancer Warning, Then Houses Need a Ghost Warning



By Alex Berezow — April 2, 2018



Credit: Storyblocks [1]

California has given up all pretense of being a state governed by reason or common sense: Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Elihu Berle ruled that coffee must carry a cancer warning label. The judge's ruling is scientifically illiterate.

Coffee has been consumed widely since about the 1600's without any apparent ill effects. Therefore, the scientific burden of proof is on those who say that coffee is dangerous.

Instead, the lawsuit has turned science upside-down by requiring coffee companies to prove that their product isn't unsafe. That is absurd, not only because it violates 400 years of common sense about coffee, but because it is impossible to prove a negative. Science also cannot prove that ghosts aren't real. Perhaps all California residences should carry a poltergeist warning, just in case.

California may already be headed that direction. Due to a law known as Proposition 65, ominous warnings must be placed in any location that contains potential carcinogens. Tourists in Disneyland and, perversely, cancer patients in [hospital oncology wards](#) [2] are greeted with the warning.

At issue in the coffee case is the presence of trace amounts of chemicals such as acrylamide. Acrylamide is an accidental byproduct of cooking. Any food that is baked, fried, or roasted probably contains trace amounts of it. Acrylamide has always been in our food, but the tools of chemistry are now so sensitive that they can detect it. However, as first stated by Paracelsus, the #1 principle in toxicology is, "The dose makes the poison." At the dose found in our food, acrylamide is not poisonous.

Furthermore, the scientific literature overwhelmingly supports the claim that coffee is healthy. According to a [literature review](#) [3] published in 2017 by the *Annual Review of Nutrition*, “coffee was associated with a probable decreased risk of breast, colorectal, colon, endometrial, and prostate cancers; cardiovascular disease and mortality; Parkinson's disease; and type-2 diabetes.” Science shows that coffee is good for you.

Of course, science was never the primary concern of those bringing the lawsuit. Money-grabbing trial lawyers know how to use scientific uncertainty to hit the jackpot. That’s how they were able to win multimillion-dollar verdicts against Johnson & Johnson over the false accusation that baby powder causes ovarian cancer.

The good news is that the average person knows that California lives in its own separate reality and will continue to enjoy a daily cup or two of joe. The bad news is that coffee companies should prepare to be extorted. Anyone who has cancer now has a legal precedent to sue Starbucks, Folgers, or perhaps your favorite local coffee shop down the street. And to comply with California law, coffee companies across the nation may be required to place a cancer warning on your coffee cup.

Worse, Americans will continue to lose faith in the integrity of the legal system. When the judiciary purposefully ignores science, everybody loses. Except, the trial lawyers, of course.

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[2] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/07/18/prop-65-glyphosate-and-how-activists-have-gamed-iarc-financial-gain-11487>

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