

NEWS FROM THE AMA
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AMA URGES CONGRESS TO PASS HEALTH ACT

New ad highlights high price of the broken medical liability system

WASHINGTON– The American Medical Association (AMA) today called on lawmakers to pass H.R. 5, the HEALTH Act, and unveiled a [new print ad \(http://www.ama-assn.org/resources/doc/washington/hr5-medical-liability-ad.pdf\)](http://www.ama-assn.org/resources/doc/washington/hr5-medical-liability-ad.pdf) emphasizing that every American pays a price for the nation’s broken medical liability system.

“The HEALTH Act contains the common-sense medical liability reforms that rein in the broken medical liability system, reduce the growth of health care costs, and preserve patients’ access to medical care,” said AMA President Cecil B. Wilson, M.D. “We all pay the price for our broken medical liability system. Every dollar spent on the broken medical liability system is a dollar that can not be used on patient care.”

The medical liability system has failed patients by inviting abuse and choking the system with claims that lack merit. According to a Harvard study, 40 percent of medical liability claims lack any evidence of either a medical error or patient injury. Additional evidence shows that 64 percent of claims against physicians that closed in 2009 were dropped, withdrawn or dismissed, yet each case cost an average of \$26,000 to defend. The annual cost of all claims amounts to \$6.4 billion and has a direct effect on the cost of medical care.

High jury awards and the cost of defending against excess litigation have resulted in record high medical liability premiums for some physicians. Many physicians pay \$150,000 or more every year for medical liability insurance. Staggering medical liability premiums have reduced patient access to care, especially among high-risk specialties.

The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office estimated that medical liability reforms similar to those in California and Texas would lower the federal deficit by \$54 billion over the 10-year period from 2010 through 2019.

“Evidence shows the same reforms in HEALTH Act are working in states such as California and Texas to stabilize the medical liability system by striking a reasonable balance between the needs of patients who have been harmed and the needs of millions of Americans who need affordable, accessible medical care,” said Dr. Wilson.

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About the American Medical Association (AMA)

The American Medical Association helps doctors help patients by uniting physicians nationwide to work on the most important professional, public health and health policy issues. The nation's largest physician organization plays a leading role in shaping the future of medicine. For more information on the AMA, please visit www.ama-assn.org.