



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

VICE CHAIRMAN JIM SAXTON

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
February 24, 2004

MEDICAL LIABILITY REFORM URGENTLY NEEDED TO HELP RESTRAIN COSTS AND IMPROVE AVAILABILITY OF HEALTH CARE

Press Release #108-100
Contact: Christopher Frenze
Chief Economist to the V.C.
(202) 225-3923
Stephen Thompson
Radio & T.V.
(202) 225-4765

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The current medical liability system is a cause of insurance and health cost increases and restricts access to health care, making medical liability reform imperative, Vice Chairman Jim Saxton said today. Saxton has released two Joint Economic Committee studies on the subject: *Liability for Medical Malpractice: Issues and Evidence*; and *Medical Malpractice Reform: Perspectives on Recent Findings by the GAO*.

“Medical liability costs are driving insurance and health costs higher, forcing medical facilities to close, and making doctors restrict health services or retire altogether,” Saxton said. “With typical jury awards in medical liability cases now reaching \$1 million dollars, the source of this crisis is not hard to identify.

“Ironically, JEC research indicates that despite its high costs, the lawsuit-based tort system for medical liability currently fails to achieve either of its goals. First, the system fails to provide compensation to the right people, as most malpractice claims are not tied to a negligent injury and most victims of negligent injuries never file a claim. Second, the tort system does not consistently punish negligent doctors. Among the chief beneficiaries are trial lawyers, and generally those not injured by negligence,” Saxton concluded.

For copies of the Joint Economic Committee studies *Liability for Medical Malpractice: Issues and Evidence* and *Medical Malpractice Reform: Perspectives on Recent Findings by the GAO*, please visit our website at www.house.gov/jec.

###