



LOUISIANA HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

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Healthcare Organizations Urge Residents to Support Constitutional Amendment 3

Baton Rouge, October 13, 2011 - The members of the Louisiana Hospital Association, Louisiana Nursing Home Association, Louisiana State Medical Society and Metropolitan Hospital Council of New Orleans are urging Louisiana residents to vote for Constitutional Amendment 3 regarding the Louisiana Patient's Compensation Fund (PCF) on the Oct. 22 ballot.

The PCF was created to provide affordable, medical malpractice coverage to private healthcare providers and to provide a certain, stable source of compensation for persons legitimately injured by medical malpractice. PCF funds are 100 percent generated by surcharges paid by doctors, hospitals, nursing homes and other healthcare providers. If passed, the language in the constitutional amendment would settle several legal debates that, if not resolved, could hinder the activities of the PCF.

"It is important for the public to understand that the dollars in the Patient's Compensation Fund are paid in by doctors, hospitals, nursing homes and other healthcare providers for payments to patients injured in Louisiana," said John Matessino, president & CEO of the Louisiana Hospital Association. "Amendment 3 protects both the state and the PCF by ensuring that the state cannot redirect the PCF funds for other purposes and that the PCF cannot make the state pay its claims."

Amendment 3 will protect the funds of the PCF from being appropriated by the legislature and will prevent the state from being liable for the debts of the PCF by clarifying that:

1. the funds are available only to pay claims of those injured by medical malpractice;
2. the state is not responsible for the liabilities of the PCF; and
3. no state general funds could be used to pay PCF liabilities unless specifically approved by the legislature after some extreme unforeseen healthcare crisis or circumstance.

"The PCF helps keep professional liability insurance rates competitive," explains Dr. Dean Griffen, president of the Louisiana State Medical Society. "If doctors have to pay higher premiums in Louisiana than they do in other states, they may think about leaving. With a physician to patient ratio already below the national average, we cannot afford any decreases in physician manpower in our state."

"Amendment 3 will ensure that funds are available to patients when needed," said Joe Donchess, executive director of the Louisiana Nursing Home Association. "This amendment is therefore good for the medical community and the public in general."

"It is also important to note that this legislation passed through the entire legislative process without any opposition," said Paul Salles, president and CEO of the Metropolitan Hospital Council of New Orleans.

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