The SVS Washington office is working to get legislation introduced in the Senate on medical liability reform that is identical to a House bill.

The House of Representatives passed House Resolution (H.R.) 1215, Protecting Access to Care Act, in June 2017. This comprehensive medical liability reform legislation is similar to laws already enacted in Texas and California. It would cap non-economic damages for pain and suffering at $250,000, create a three-year statute of limitations for filing lawsuits and allow states to keep laws that may differ from federal laws. It also would ease the cost burden shared by both patients and physicians, as a lack of federal liability reform increases health care costs and reduces access to care.

SVS participates in the Health Coalition on Liability and Access (HCLA), which supports the resolution. This coalition represents physicians and patients working to reduce medical lawsuit abuse and enacting federal legislation that eliminates inconsistent and ever-changing state liability laws.

The coalition has now turned its attention to the Senate, which presently has not introduced a companion bill. Though consideration is seen as an uphill battle, the HCLA “remains committed to advancing true reform legislation.” The SVS will likely organize a grassroots effort when legislation is introduced. The SVS and coalition also support the Good Samaritan Health Professionals Act, H.R. 1876/S.781, bipartisan legislation introduced in both the House and Senate. The House bill was passed by the Energy and Commerce Committee on Feb. 14.

These companion bills would eliminate the threat of medical liability lawsuits for licensed health care providers who assist victims of federally declared natural disasters.
SVS and 29 other health care organizations signed a letter supporting the legislation (see vsweb.org/Samaritan) writing that it "will ensure that an adequate supply of trained health care professionals are ready, willing and able to volunteer their services during a catastrophe and that they will not be deterred or turned away due to the threat of lawsuits."

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