

Washington Needs Liability Reform Now

It affects everything from access to healthcare to clogged courtrooms.

Why Support Liability Reform?

- ✓ Lawyers take too high of a percentage of money awarded to injured parties in lawsuit settlements.
- ✓ Reforms would limit lawsuits filed by people wanting to blame obesity on restaurants.
- ✓ Reforms would ensure defendants pay only their share of judgments due to their share of the fault and no defendant would become the “deep pocket.”
- ✓ Access to medical care is declining as doctors continue to limit high-risk procedures such as surgeries and delivering babies.
- ✓ Reasonable medical malpractice reforms have worked in other states. The results are: more money paid to injured parties, payments received faster, and malpractice premiums kept under control.
- ✓ Reasonable reforms will NOT take away an injured party’s right to seek legal action. These reforms simply ask that settlements are fair and balanced.

What is at Stake?

- Nationally, about \$108 billion is added each year to the cost of healthcare because physicians feel compelled to practice defensive medicine – ordering unnecessary tests and making unnecessary referrals – to avoid future litigation.
- More and more physicians have stopped practicing clinical medicine because they simply cannot afford liability insurance premiums.
- Doctors have moved out of rural communities because premiums are too high to spread the costs across fewer patients in small towns.
- 45 percent of physicians have reduced or eliminated high-risk services (such as maternity services and surgeries) to avoid unaffordable liability insurance premiums.
- Since 2000, taxpayers have footed the bill for \$170 million in lawsuits filed against state government because they had “deeper pockets” than other defendants.
- Higher insurance premiums for homebuilders increase the cost of building a home.
- Employers are encouraged not to provide references on past employees due to liability concerns.

Who Supports Liability Reform?

Liability Reform is supported by more than 60 organizations across Washington state – representing doctors, small businesses, architects, engineers, homebuilders, patient advocates, nursing homes and dozens more.

A recent public poll showed that an overwhelming majority:

- Agree people should not be allowed to sue restaurants because they choose to eat unhealthy or fattening foods
- Believe many personal injury lawyers are more concerned about the money they make than getting justice for their clients
- Support a limit on non-economic damages in medical malpractice lawsuits
- Agree defendants in lawsuits should only have to pay their fair share of a judgment
- Believe medical malpractice lawsuits are either a crisis or major problem because they increase overall healthcare costs