mother would surely die. However, in trying to save the mother, the child's life would be put in jeopardy.

Surgery was performed on the woman, expecting that there was this problem at the appendectomy site, but no evidence of an anastomotic leak was found. The child was delivered but, sadly, died of extreme prematurity; but the mother, after the operation, immediately improved, and within 24 hours, was nearly well and was discharged from the hospital a few days later.

After these tragic events, an attorney sued Dr. Hatton on behalf of the shocked and saddened family of this young woman. Every practitioner involved in the case was sued, but Dr. Hatton was the ultimate target. The case went to trial and Dr. Hatton prevailed. What the attorney should have recognized at the point of the depositions, had he not been blinded by greed, was the fact that, in this tragic and sad case, there was no negligent party.

However, that attorney continued to drag Dr. Hatton through a long and arduous legal battle, and delayed the time that that family could eventually heal from their psychological wounds. This was a costly, time-consuming, and an emotional process for both the doctor and the family, all for the agenda of a third party.

There are thousands of other doctors with similar stories. The crisis is at a breaking point. Doctors are being driven from their practices, leaving the Nation with a serious health professional shortage. The legal environment in which doctors must work is lopsided to favor a very narrow special interest group, that of the trial lawyer. Patients are losing access to specialized care that they need because doctors are being driven out of business.

Trial lawyers prey on vulnerable patients and doctors rarely in pursuit of justice, but frequently in pursuit of material gain. Nearly every State in the country now faces this crisis. A national solution is needed now. Fortunately for us, H.R. 5, which we will debate this week, will immediately address this problem by providing the national solution that is needed when it comes to the floor. I urge passage of H.R. 5.

GOVERNMENT PENSION OFFSET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk with my colleagues on a very controversial provision within the Social Security Protection Act which the House will be considering on the floor tomorrow. This legislation includes a number of important provisions to defend Social Security against fraud and abuse, and ensure that disabled beneficiaries are protected.

Unfortunately, this legislation fails to offer any protections to an equally important population: public employees who suffer at the hands of an unfair provision known as the government pension offset. In States where some public employees are not covered by Social Security, such as Texas, the government pension offset reduces spousal benefits by two-thirds, and, in some cases, eliminates these benefits altogether.

This provision unfairly penalizes public servants such as schoolteachers, firefighters, and police officers who educate our children, protect us from harm, and care for us during emergencies. This is a particular burden for widows, especially our public school teachers who had planned their retirement benefits thinking they would receive a full spousal benefit, because their spouses did pay into the Social Security trust fund. The only way they can escape this unfair penalty is by working their last days in a job covered by Social Security and their retirement system.

Unfortunately, so many school districts and some law enforcement agencies in Texas do not have both their pension plan plus Social Security. Unfortunately, the legislation we are considering tomorrow would prevent teachers from using this benefit, forcing them to work 5 more years in order to receive a full spousal benefit. In other words, they would have to leave their jobs at the school district which may not be part of the Social Security system, because in 1983 Congress allowed public employees not to be included, to then work for a school district that is both under the teacher retirement system in Texas and Social Security for 5 years.

We should not punish teachers by stripping away this right unless we address the underlying problem, the unfair government pension offset, the GPO. The widow's benefit is vital to many individuals in my district, especially public school teachers, who have worked their whole lives trying to educate our children. It is not by their choice that they happen to work in a school district that does not pay Social Security; it is school district decisions by the board Members.

I have received literally hundreds of phone calls and messages from constituents who are hurt by this provision. They planned their retirement thinking that they would receive a pension benefit or spousal benefit if their husbands or wives die.

Let us be clear: Most of the impact of this provision is on women. At the time they chose their profession, teaching may have been the best opportunity for females; but they retire, to find that they are not eligible for their husband's benefit, their widow's benefit, because they receive a public pension that was not covered under Social Security. By that time, it is too late.

I could give many examples of people who have worked many years teaching our children, working as a custodian in our school districts, or helping serve food to our children whose husband passed away and they find out, well, sorry, you do not pay Social Security, even though your husband did all those years, and now you do not receive but a very small amount, or none, of Social Security widow's benefits.

H.R. 743, that is on the floor tomorrow, will make it harder for teachers and other public servants to get the benefits they deserve, but it does nothing to address the unfair system that created this situation in the first place.

I encourage my colleagues to stand up for public servants by opposing this legislation tomorrow, and to work instead to eliminate the government pension offset, the GPO. I am a strong supporter of legislation introduced by my colleagues, the gentlemen from California, Mr. MCKEON and Mr. BERMAN, which would eliminate the government pension offset and the windfall elimination provision, another quirk in Social Security that hurts public employees. That is legislation we should be considering tomorrow, but we are not.

I know my colleague, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JEFFERSON), has been a champion on this issue and is planning on introducing legislation which would provide a remedy for the government offset. We should consider these bills before we consider H.R. 743.

I urge my colleagues and the leadership to act on these bills and finally solve the government pension offset problem.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. EDWARDS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PLANS STILL VITAL FOR JUSTICE IN UNIVERSITY ATTENDANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I want to share that today is the third anniversary of the march on Tallahassee in Tallahassee, Florida. It took place in 2000, to stand not only for justice by affirmative action in this State, but ultimately this country.

The adoption of affirmative action programs in the '60s reflected our Nation's aspirations to overcome long-entrenched injustices and become a society of equal opportunity, or at least to make sure that everyone has the opportunity in higher education that would like to have it.

Now, not only the President but the Governor of the State of Florida, Jeb Bush, has put forth a brief to the Supreme Court fighting against equal opportunity for all. I think it is important that we as Americans come together at a time such as this and commend those that have come forward.