

in September of last year, September 2003, a constitutional amendment was passed in the State of Texas which allowed this legislation to take effect.

In Texas, Commissioner Montemayor had seen his number of liability insurers, the number of companies that wrote insurance for physicians in Texas, decline from a high of 17 to a low of four; and Commissioner Montemayor correctly recognized that if that situation continued, medical practice as we know it was going to disappear from the State of Texas.

Texas is a large State, and very different regions were affected differently. The Rio Grande Valley was particularly hard hit, not necessarily in the dollar amounts that were awarded by juries in that region, but more so just by the sheer number of lawsuits. Most practitioners and physicians in that area could be expected to be sued three or four times a year, oftentimes for sums of money not exceeding \$100,000, but still the time away from family and practice in defending those lawsuits and the wear and tear on a doctor's soul was considerable in that portion of the State.

Right before the constitutional amendment passed, there was a significant increase in the filing of lawsuits in the State of Texas; but since the constitutional amendment passed, the number of suits has dropped precipitously.

□ 2300

Commissioner Montemayor also pointed out to us that there are companies that are reducing their insurance rates to physicians in Texas as a result of this legislation, a constitutional amendment that was passed. And, in fact, Texas Medical Liability Trust, my old insurer of record, has reduced their rates by 12 percent this year.

Another insurer who sought a rate increase and, in fact, had received a rate increase of over 100 percent in the State of Oklahoma and 39 percent in the State of Florida actually is going to receive no rate increase in the State of Texas this year.

So it has been good news on not only the number of insurers that is available which has now increased to 12 but also the rates paid by hospitals and physicians in Texas has significantly reduced.

Commissioner Montemayor told us that he thought hospitals had fared somewhat better than physicians in this new day that has dawned in the State of Texas.

Dr. Cassidy, the emergency physician from California, was there in 1975 in California when the Medical Injury Compensation Reform Act of 1975 was passed in California by a Governor of California who was on the Democratic side, Jerry Brown, past candidate for president.

But Dr. Cassidy related how the \$250,000 cap on non-economic damages had stood the test of time, and in fact he had some rather graphic evidence

showing how rates in that State had stayed relatively stable while rates across the country had exploded.

Paul Bahcarach, the chief executive officer of Uniontown, Pennsylvania hospital where the situation has far from improved, in fact, the situation has deteriorated in Pennsylvania significantly over the past years, told some rather poignant stories of the inability to hire, to attract physicians to the State of Pennsylvania. He was not able to cover services that he wanted to provide; and, in fact, he told of a service area of 148,000 people that was serviced by one single ear, nose and throat physician. If I have done my arithmetic right, that is about one ENT doctor for 300,000 ears, which is a lot of ears to be responsible for in a community.

Dr. Palmisano, the general surgeon from New Orleans who has been the past president of the American Medical Association, again spoke with a good deal of passion on what he saw as some of the solutions available to us. We will talk about this in rights to come.

Dr. Palmisano gave excellent testimony on how the doctors in this country are engaged and see this as a real problem, threatening to their profession.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. HARRIS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. LEE addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

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

REPUBLICAN PLAN FOR AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. TIAHRT) is recognized for half the time until midnight as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. TIAHRT. Madam Speaker, while the Nation has been watching the Presidential campaign and the events in Iraq, the Republicans in the House have been moving forward with an agenda to bring jobs back into America.

Now, we have seen a lot of economic success over the last year. Just as a reminder, back in 1999 we had the first hit to our then strong economy when we had the tech bubble burst. We had a lot of technical industries lose a great deal of value. The NASDAQ, which typically has tech companies as the companies that trade on that exchange, the value of that exchange dropped dramatically to less than half. So the tech bubble burst.

Then in 2000 we had the beginning of the recession towards the end of the year. Technically, it started in the end of 2000 prior to President Bush being sworn into office. That had an impact on our economy.

Then, of course, there was the events of September 11, when terrorists took our own technology and turned it into a weapon and attacked the Pentagon and Washington, D.C., and tore down the World Trade Center, killing nearly 3,000 people. That had a dramatic impact on our economy.

It was not any policy of the Republican administration. It was not any policies that came out of the Republican House. It was events that occurred, as I just discussed, beyond the circumstances of Congress. Those events, though, have turned around since we passed tax relief.

Tax relief has been very beneficial to the American economy because people can only do one of three things when