



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**HCLA Praises President Bush's Continued Commitment
to Medical Liability Reform**

Urges Congressional Action to Preserve Patient Access

Washington DC – The Health Coalition on Liability and Access (HCLA) praised President Bush's call on the U.S. Senate to pass critical medical liability reform in Tuesday night's State of the Union Address. In his remarks, the President directly addressed the issue saying, "And because lawsuits are driving many good doctors out of practice – leaving women in nearly 1,500 American counties without a single OB/GYN – I ask the Congress to pass medical liability reform this year."

Christian Shalgian, Chair of the HCLA said, "The President understands that we must enact common-sense medical liability reform to preserve patients' access to care, and to allow doctors to continue to provide quality medical services. The Congress must act now to pass meaningful liability reform, including reasonable limits on non-economic damages, to prevent our nation's medical liability crisis from worsening."

Our nation's broken medical liability system has caused insurance premiums for physicians to soar to record highs. In many states, doctors are increasingly finding insurance to be unaffordable, particularly in fields that are considered to be high-risk, such as neurosurgery and obstetrics. Faced with escalating insurance rates, many doctors are scaling back the services they offer, while some physicians are abandoning the practice of medicine altogether. This is becoming a major threat to the accessibility and affordability of quality health care to patients across the country.

In recent years, the U.S. House of Representatives has passed medical liability reform legislation that would place reasonable limits on non-economic damages, a reform President Bush strongly supports. However, the initiative has repeatedly stalled in the Senate. The HCLA agrees with an editorial in the Washington Post, asserting that in Tuesday night's address, "Mr. Bush served up a sensible

proposal to limit doctors' liability that has so far failed in Congress." ("Altered State," The Washington Post, 2/1/2006)

The Health Coalition on Liability and Access is comprised of individuals and organizations united in their commitment to preserving patient access through federal medical liability reform. Shalgian adds that, "The members of the HCLA appreciate President Bush's continued support and leadership on this critical issue. We will continue to urge Congress to take action on medical liability reform and bring it to an up-or-down vote in the Senate."

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**HEALTH CARE LIABILITY EXPERTS AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS
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For more details, visit www.hcla.org. Health Coalition on Liability & Access is a national advocacy coalition of organizations representing doctors, hospitals, health care liability insurers, long-term care facilities, health care insurers, employers, and health care consumers. HCLA believes federal legislation, including reasonable limits on non-economic damages, is needed to bring fairness, timeliness and cost-efficiency to America's medical liability system.