



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JULY 9, 2003**

**FOR INTERVIEWS CONTACT
Chieko Noguchi - 202.380.0616**

HCLA Disappointed by Senate Action

**Vows to Redouble Efforts to Pass Reforms to Preserve Access
to Health Care for all Americans**

Washington DC – The Senate today deferred action on S.11, the Patients First Act of 2003. By a vote of 49-48, the Senate defeated a procedural motion that would have allowed debate on the bill to proceed.

Christian Shalgian, Chair of the Health Coalition on Liability and Access (HCLA) said that although today's events are "disappointing," he is "optimistic" that the Senate will eventually debate this important legislation and bring it to a up-or-down vote.

"Patients, doctors, and health care providers around the country are dealing every day with a worsening crisis in health care access caused by an out-of-control medical liability system," Shalgian said. "Doctors are being forced out of the practice of medicine, and patients are suffering because their access to high quality, innovative and affordable health care is curtailed. The nation urgently needs some common-sense reforms to be enacted."

The House of Representatives has already passed legislation similar to S.11, and President Bush has given S.11 his strong support. Senator Ensign (R-Nevada) is the chief sponsor of the Senate bill, which allows unlimited economic damages and puts in place reforms to curtail frivolous lawsuits and set reasonable limits on non-economic damage awards.

"HCLA represents thousands of individuals and organizations around the country who are committed to preserving access to health care and keeping overall health care costs under control," Shalgian said. "Today's action to delay consideration of these much-needed reforms is unfortunate because this issue is so important – and the need for action is urgent. We will redouble our efforts to emphasize the need for action, and we look forward to working with the Congress to advance this issue and bring it to a vote soon."

**HEALTH CARE LIABILITY EXPERTS AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS
CONTACT CHIEKO NOGUCHI – 202.380.0616**

For more details, visit www.hcla.org. Health Coalition on Liability & Access is a national advocacy coalition of more than fifty organizations representing doctors, hospitals, health care liability insurers, pharmaceutical companies, health care insurers, employers and health care consumers. HCLA believes federal legislation is needed to bring fairness, timeliness and cost-efficiency to America's medical liability system.