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NEWS RELEASE

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Important Revisions Needed in Health-Reform Bill, Local Physicians Say *Freedom of Choice, Liability Reform Are Major Concerns*

“Congress should address several key problems in the proposed health care reform legislation before passing any final bill”, say local physicians with the St. Louis Metropolitan Medical Society. The bill before Congress is H.R. 3200, the “America’s Affordable Health Choices Act.”

“We recognize the need for health care reform, and the importance of access to health care for all. But it must be done in a way that does not harm the delivery of health care, nor interfere with the doctor-patient relationship,” said Elie C. Azrak, MD, FACC, FSCAI, Medical Society president.

Physicians see freedom of choice for patients, and every person’s ability to freely make their own health care decisions, as the cornerstone of any meaningful health system reform: “Medical decisions must continue to be made by medical professionals based on compassion as well as scientific evidence, in the context of the trusting doctor-patient relationship”, affirmed Dr. Azrak.

Physicians also point out that H.R. 3200 fails to provide for relief from the high cost of medical lawsuit abuse, one of the biggest contributors to the rising cost of health care. “Any plan that ignores frivolous lawsuit reform cannot be effective. Unless professional liability expenses are controlled, a significant portion of health care dollars will continue to go to defensive medicine and trial lawyer fees,” Dr. Azrak said.

He added, “A well-crafted health reform bill can make quality health care more affordable and accessible, and create a system that works for both patients and providers. We hope Congress will examine carefully the weaknesses of the bill currently under consideration, and see the merits of including meaningful liability reform in the final legislation.”

Founded in 1835, the St. Louis Metropolitan Medical Society represents medical and osteopathic physicians in St. Louis city and county, and works closely with the Missouri State Medical Association and the American Medical Association in promoting the principles of medical ethics and protecting the patient-physician relationship. The SLMMS has its offices in Creve Coeur; the society Web site is www.slmms.org.

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