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Patient Safety Tour Comes to Rockford

Malpractice Survivors Urge Local Legislators to Protect Patient Safety and Oppose “Caps” Bill

Rockford—Standing in front of a 15 foot wheelchair to symbolize their injuries caused by medical negligence, Martha and Brad Metheny and Elie and Kathy Ghawi joined with Center for Justice and Democracy’s Patient Safety Tour in Rockford today. They set up their wheelchair adjacent to Greenwood cemetery to call attention to the up to 4300 people who die each year in Illinois hospitals from preventable medical errors. The survivors called on local lawmakers to stop legislation in the State House and Senate to cap compensation to victims of preventable medical errors.

“This proposal would devastate people already distraught by their losses,” said Brad Metheny, a Rockford man who was injured due to medical malpractice. “People depend on this compensation to restore their quality of life. Instead, lawmakers should be looking to reduce medical errors in the first place. We need to protect patients first. The insurance industry wants to take money from these people without even proving it would lower doctors’ insurance rates.”

Metheny is part of a statewide Patient Safety Tour sponsored by the Center for Justice and Democracy, a non-profit consumer protection organization. The tour comes at a crucial time as both the Illinois House and Senate are poised to vote on legislation to cap compensation to medical malpractice victims. The tour came to Rockford to urge Senator Syverson and Representative Jefferson, Winters and Wait to oppose the anti-consumer legislation. Representative Wait is a co-sponsor of the House bill that contains these cruel provisions.

“Patients and consumer groups are asking Rockford-area legislators to stand up for the rights of all Illinois residents to obtain justice through our courts system if they are harmed by a negligent doctor, hospital or nursing home,” said Mark Fraley, Field Organizer for CJ&D-Illinois. “They have the opportunity to address the real problem with malpractice—too many preventable injuries and deaths from medical negligence. They can stand up as heroes for patient safety and consumer protection by voting against these ‘cap’ bills.”

“Preventable medical errors can happen to anyone,” added Kathy Ghawi, whose husband’s brain was operated on the wrong side. “Instead of punishing the patient, our legislators need to look at reforming the insurance industry.”

Bills under consideration in both legislative chambers would severely cap “non-economic” compensation to patients injured by negligent medical care. Numerous studies have shown that these caps do not work to lower malpractice insurance for physicians, but do severely limit the access of women, children, seniors, and the poor to the court.

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The Center for Justice and Democracy is a non-profit, non-partisan consumer protection organization that works to educate citizens about the importance of the civil justice system. For more information, see www.centerjd.org.

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