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Center for Justice & Democracy's Illinois Focus Fall 2007 Newsletter

Medical Malpractice Caps Fight Rages on in Court

As you know, we lost the 2005 legislative battle when Governor Blagojevich signed the law to limit, or cap, "non-economic" damages to \$500,000 for negligent doctors and \$1,000,000 for negligent hospitals. Our defeat by big insurance and the medical lobby that backed the cap on compensation to medical malpractice victims was more than a great disappointment for us. It was a major blow to consumers and injured patients throughout the state of Illinois.

At the time, we and some supportive politicians knew the law was unconstitutional. And now, that law is being challenged in the important case of Abigaile LeBron, an infant who suffered severe and permanent injuries from lack of oxygen during her birth due to negligence.

The decisions by the courts will decide the fate of victims of medical malpractice in this state. Regardless of the courts' decisions, the issue will not end with the bang of a gavel.

The opposition has been pouring millions of dollars into a media campaign to win public opinion. Many people do not understand how cruel caps are in cases involving catastrophic injuries like Abigaile's, and that juries, not politicians, should be making decisions about fair compensation in cases like this.

Just like in 2005, we need your help in spreading the word about the true nature of the "caps" law and the injustice done to victims when they cannot receive full and fair compensation awarded by a jury. If you would like to know more about how you can participate in this battle against big insurance and the medical lobby, please contact CJ&D-IL at illinois@centerjd.org or **312-644-8442**.

We need your help to fight this war on Illinois victims!

Standing Up for Health Care for ALL

On June 21, 2007, CJ&D-IL was joined by Physicians for a National Health Plan, the National Nurse Organizing Committee, Illinois Campaign for Better Healthcare, Illinois Citizen Action and a host of other community organizations to host a rally and the Chicago Premiere of Michael Moore's latest film "SiCKO". The film is a hard and honest look into America's healthcare system done in Moore's trademark style.



About 500 people joined Michael Moore, legendary broadcaster Studs Terkel, Dr. Quentin Young and others to speak about the need for universal coverage for all Americans. The rally took place at Daley Centennial Plaza in Grant Park. Moore led the crowd made up of doctors, nurses, medical students, and other citizens in a chant of "it is we the people, not me the people," while the crowd waved signs that read "Everybody in, nobody out."

The film will be available on DVD in early November. For more information about the film or universal health coverage, please visit www.michaelmoore.com

What's Happening in Brief

- **On October 2, CJ&D released a report on construction safety in Illinois.** The report exposed the hazardous and deadly nature of the construction industry in Illinois since the elimination of a safety law more than a decade ago. According to the report, construction worker safety was weakened in 1995 when the Illinois legislature repealed the Structural Work Act, which was law for 88 years prior. The repeal of this law removed critical safety standards, stripped injured workers of legal protections and reduced the incentive for owners, operators and contractors to maintain a safe worksite. Find the full report on CJ&D's website at <http://centerjd.org/illinois>.



- **Take Action Now:** Contact your local newspaper. We are asking people to contact their local newspapers by writing a letter to the editor or an op-ed about how caps on compensation hurt the most seriously injured. Here are a few basic hints on how to write a letter or op-ed: write to your local paper, tell your personal story, keep it brief, be direct and to the point. Please contact us or look to our blog for more help and resources.



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- **Internship Program:** This fall CJ&D-IL began its first internship program. The unpaid intern positions will focus on communication and research. It is an opportunity for people to gain valuable hands-on knowledge of civil justice issues, organizing, writing and the political process.

Our first research intern is Bianca Easterly. Bianca graduated from the University of Illinois with a Bachelors of Arts in French in 2002 and received a Masters of Public Policy (MPP) in 2004. She is planning to pursue a doctoral program in the near future.

If you know someone that may be interested in interning for CJ&D-IL, please ask them to contact us at **312-644-8442** or illinois@centerjd.org.

- **New resource: Illinois Deserves the truth.** We have launched a new blog called **Illinois Deserves the Truth** (www.illinoisdeservesthetruth.org). The blog is dedicated to presenting a consumer perspective on the importance of civil justice. The topics will focus on Illinois and national civil justice issues and will contain resources for people to learn about and participate in our fight against the lies told by big business and the insurance industry. Contact us if you wish to be a guest contributor or come across news that you would like to share.