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**CONSUMER GROUPS AND MALPRACTICE SURVIVORS
LAUNCH NATIONAL BUS TOUR PROTESTING
PRESIDENT BUSH'S CALL FOR MALPRACTICE LIMITS**

In a forceful response to federal and state legislative efforts nationwide to severely limit compensation for those injured by medical malpractice, the Center for Justice & Democracy is today launching a *Medical Rights Bus Tour, 2003*. The tour is being organized by consumer and patients' rights groups to educate lawmakers, opinion leaders, and the public as to why limiting legal rights is terrible public policy, will do nothing to help doctors who are being price-gouged by insurers and will hurt innocent people. Many patients have suffered under similar laws enacted in several states.

According to Joanne Doroshow, Executive Director of the Center for Justice & Democracy, "The President's plan will lead to more medical errors and do nothing to help doctors who are being price-gouged by insurance companies. Moreover, it will disproportionately hurt the most severely injured Americans, such as seniors in nursing homes, quadriplegic workers and brain-damaged children."

Doroshow said that after the news conference, the bus will head to Tennessee, home state of Senator Bill Frist, making a stopover in West Virginia. It will then stop in 13 states through the end of February. These states include Arkansas, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York, Delaware, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Vermont, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and Nebraska. The bus will head west in March.

Linda McDougal, who recently went public about receiving an unnecessary double mastectomy after being mistakenly told she had cancer, said, "President Bush wants to put through rather rapidly a cap on medical malpractice compensation. His intent is to harm me. It's not to make doctors accountable for their actions. Don't penalize the patients. Don't penalize the victims."

California resident Kathy Olsen, whose son Steven was severely brain-damaged due to a medical error and whose compensation was drastically cut due to California law that caps damages, said, "Ten years ago, Steven came home from a 5-month life-changing stay at the hospital. He was only 2 years old. When he went into the hospital no one asked his party affiliation. He was a casualty of the system. The system that he had no say in. Which lawmakers were looking out for him? Now with all his disabilities he will never see, do things that the average person gets to do

in their lifetime, or vote in an election. Please look out for all the Steven Olsens in this great country. Don't let this happen over and over again.”

According to Doroshov, “The *Medical Rights Bus Tour, 2003* comes at a crucial time as House and Senate Republicans have expedited consideration of limits on compensation for those injured or killed by medical malpractice and President Bush strongly supported this policy in a January 16, 2003 speech.”

The bus will be driven by lawyer/activist Gene Stilp of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Malpractice survivors and other representatives of patients’ rights and consumer groups will join the bus along the way to help raise awareness about the damage that would be caused if either state or federal legislators adopted Bush administration proposals to cap compensation for injured patients.

For more information about the tour, contact Andy Goldberg at the Center for Justice & Democracy at 917/348-5579.

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