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NATIONAL POLL CONFIRMS AMERICANS SUPPORT CURBS ON MALPRACTICE LAWSUITS

California's Medical Malpractice Reforms (MICRA) Should Be Used as a Template for National Reform

SACRAMENTO, CA -- *Lisa Maas, executive director of Californians Allied for Patient Protection (CAPP), issued the following statement in response to an Associated Press/Stanford University poll released today which found 54% of Americans support making it harder for personal injury lawyers to sue health care providers.*

CAPP is a coalition of physicians, hospitals, community clinics, local governments, dentists and other groups supporting California's Medical Insurance Compensation Reform Act (MICRA) law which provides reasonable limits on medical malpractice lawsuits. MICRA provides injured patients unlimited compensation for economic damages (lost wages, medical costs), unlimited punitive damages, but limits non-economic damages (pain and suffering) to \$250,000.

"It's no surprise Americans favor limiting medical malpractice lawsuits. Clearly, frivolous lawsuits don't result in better care, just more dollars spent on defensive medicine and unnecessary tests that drive up the cost of health care for everyone.

"California enacted medical malpractice reform, the Medical Injury Compensation Reform Act (MICRA), in response to a crisis of too many lawsuits which were forcing doctors to quit practicing medicine and endangering patients who were losing access to health care services.

"California's MICRA has saved health care consumers billions of dollars, limited the number of meritless lawsuits against health care providers, and has ensured injured patients are fairly compensated. Congress would be wise to use MICRA as a template as they craft federal health care reform.

"Not surprisingly, personal injury lawyers are opposed to MICRA and other states' reforms that clamp down on frivolous lawsuits and out-of-control non-economic or "pain and suffering" damages. They want to increase the non-economic damages cap which would mean a bigger pay day for them and more incentive to file lawsuits, but would cost consumers and taxpayers billions of dollars and imperil access to doctors, clinics and health providers.

"We believe it's more important to preserve access to affordable, quality healthcare, than it is to financially motivate personal injury lawyers to file more frivolous lawsuits. Clearly, the American public agrees."