

Mass. voters back med mal caps

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A new poll reveals that a vast majority of Massachusetts voters believe that the issue of medical malpractice in health-care is a major problem or crisis and shows that a large percentage of the voting public favors limits on compensation for "pain and suffering" in malpractice cases.

The poll was conducted by The McCormack School at the University of Massachusetts/ Boston and surveyed 402 registered Massachusetts voters between September 3 and 7.

"Massachusetts voters now recognize that medical malpractice costs are a threat to the health care system. Further, the issue now appears to have what we characterize as 'voter penetration.' It has reached the stage of being a political issue and could become a major topic in the next campaign season," Lou DiNatale, director of the Center for State and Local Policy at The McCormack School, said.

According to the poll, 83% think that the issue of medical malpractice insurance is either a "major problem" or a "crisis;" and 74% favor limits on the amount patients can be awarded for "pain and suffering" in lawsuits.

* 68% think that physicians leaving the state because of the declining work environment for doctors is a serious problem;

* 58% think that patients bring too many lawsuits against doctors.

The Massachusetts Medical Society has filed a medical liability reform bill. The bill contains seven key provisions, including a firm limit of \$500,000 on non-economic damages, while economic damages, such as medical costs and lost wages, would be covered in full. The legislation also contains other financial and legal improvements, as well as a provision to enhance patient safety through increased reporting by insurers involved in lawsuits.

The survey results come just weeks before a public hearing on the bill before the legislature's Judiciary Committee on October 9.