

Voice of the Southern: Legislature has real opportunity for malpractice reform

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Our region has struggled with the medical malpractice issue, and suffered more, than nearly any other part of the state.

But attention from the Legislature has been slow in coming.

Now that the medical malpractice issue has reached from Chicago to Southern Illinois, legislators are paying a great deal more attention.

In recent days, there has been real movement in the Legislature. There may be an opportunity for real, meaningful reform. But with the Legislature scheduled to adjourn May 27, action is critical.

A House bill which calls for a limit of \$250,000 on non-economic damage awards against a physician and a \$500,000 limit on awards against hospitals seems to have the most momentum.

The House bill has its share of detractors.

In fact, the so-called Center for Justice and Democracy played a nasty trick on state Rep. John Bradley, D-Marion, this past Friday in retaliation for the bill and the call for caps. The group planted an 15-foot-tall wheelchair in front of Bradley's Marion office and placed calls to local media falsely indicating Bradley had a press conference going on at his office, knowing full well that Bradley had another event in the region.

This type of game-playing with medical malpractice needs to end.

The time for posturing and name-calling has ended.

It's time for action.

We've had another positive sign, in addition to movement in Springfield, our downstate lawmakers appear to be banding together in a bipartisan effort to push for medical liability reform.

Many contend that even if a measure was passed today and signed tomorrow by the governor, it would still take time to effect change. However, the passage would show the medical community that Illinois is ready to make overdue changes and create an environment that would to keep doctors here, knowing that relief is on the horizon.

Supporters of the House bill also contend that is strong enough to survive judicial challenges.

We applaud those who have fought long and hard on this issue.

It appears a measure of victory could be at hand. But we the citizens of Southern Illinois need to continue to push hard on this issue.

It's time for action. We hope the Legislature is ready to move.