

Letter to the Editor...

Dear Editor,

In this week's Courier Herald column ("Lawmakers to Consider State Level Healthcare Reforms"), Charlie Harper writes about a proposal currently before the Georgia General Assembly that would take away Georgia citizens' Constitutional Right to Trial by Jury when they have been harmed through the negligence of their healthcare provider. I was glad to see that Mr. Harper correctly identified two of the major concerns with this legislation – that it is an unconstitutional assault on Georgia patients,

and that it is a flawed big-government "solution" that only serves to stand between patients and their doctors.

One of the most important rights enumerated in the Bill of Rights and the Georgia Constitution is the Constitutional Right to Trial by Jury in civil cases. It has, since the very inception of our great country, served as the great equalizer – an opportunity for individuals who have been harmed by the actions of another to seek redress before an unbiased jury of their fellow citizens on a level playing field. Clearly, this proposal runs afoul of that guarantee,

and I am confident that our Supreme Court would agree that Senate Bill 141 is an unconstitutional violation of our rights.

In addition, it is clear that creating a new government-run bureaucracy will not be effective in holding sub-standard healthcare providers accountable for the harm they do to Georgia patients. Contrary to the claims of the proponents of SB 141, this legislation would not have a deterrent effect on healthcare costs in our state. Instead, this bill will only serve to misappropriate taxpayer dollars in order to shield dangerous

healthcare providers from answering for their harmful practices.

Simply put, this proposal seeks to unconstitutionally replace our time-tested civil jury system with a burdensome, taxpayer-funded government bureaucracy in which doctors alone would sit in judgment over the conduct of their colleagues. I applaud Charlie for bringing to light the flaws of this legislation.

Sincerely,

Daniel B. Snipes
Attorney
Dublin & Statesboro