

UPDATE

neurosurgery

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Neurosurgeons Applaud President Obama's Call for an End to Defensive Medicine
America's Neurosurgeons Agree that Medical Liability Reform is a Critical Element in the Larger Healthcare Reform Debate

(Washington, DC) – President Obama, in his address to a joint session of Congress tonight, stated that “defensive medicine” does contribute to unnecessary costs in healthcare and will now explore options for medical liability reform. The [American Association of Neurological Surgeons](#) (AANS) and [Congress of Neurological Surgeons](#) (CNS) applaud the President's inclusion of this key element as lawmakers move forward with an overall healthcare reform plan.

“It is absolutely crucial that a discussion of, and plan for, meaningful healthcare reform in this country includes concrete measures to improve the burdens of medical liability. Surgeons are drowning in a sea of lawsuits and escalating insurance premiums. It truly is impeding patient access to care and our ability to save lives,” comments **Troy M. Tippett, MD**, President of the AANS. “We wholeheartedly agree with President Obama's statement, ‘We need to put patient safety first and let the doctors focus on practicing medicine.’ It is time that the issue of medical liability reform is addressed and resolved. This alone will be a major step in reducing the cost of healthcare.” In fact, recent figures estimate the overall costs of defensive medicine at an astounding \$210 billion per year.

P. David Adelson, MD, President of the CNS adds, “As the voice of the nation's neurosurgeons, we urge the President and lawmakers to include as a component of health system reform, reasonable limits on non-economic damages and other proven medical liability reforms which we believe will hold down defensive medicine costs, weed out frivolous lawsuits, keep medical liability premiums down, and most importantly preserve patient access to care.”

Additionally, while America's neurosurgeons support reforming our nation's healthcare system, including covering the uninsured, we remain deeply concerned that President Obama is still pushing for a public health insurance option. Dr. Tippett adds, “We believe the inclusion of a public health insurance option will likely lead to more and more Americans being covered by this government-sponsored plan and it will, ultimately, eliminate choice and lead to a single-payer, government run healthcare system.”

Also, while we appreciate the President's push for preventive care in healthcare reform, we want to highlight the growing need for specialty medicine. Unfortunately, not all diseases and disorders are preventable; people will still have accidents and develop conditions that require specialty care treatment. This is not a time to curb specialty care services or patient access to such services when our country faces a shortage of 41,000 surgeons and 8,000 other specialists by the year 2025.

Finally, we agree with the President's comments this evening that we need to build on what works rather than build a new healthcare system from scratch; there is no need for a complete overhaul of our current system as there are many good elements of it that should remain. The AANS and CNS want to emphasize that our lawmakers can indeed enact meaningful health system reform to reduce costs and improve quality -- which works well for most Americans -- without dismantling the current system. We too believe that, “Now is the time to deliver on healthcare.”

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*The **American Association of Neurological Surgeons** (AANS), founded in 1931, and the **Congress of Neurological Surgeons** (CNS), founded in 1951, are the two largest scientific and educational associations for neurosurgical professionals in the world. These groups represent approximately 7,600 neurosurgeons worldwide. Neurological surgery is the medical specialty concerned with the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of disorders that affect the entire nervous system, including the spinal column, spinal cord, brain and peripheral nerves.*