
FLORIDA

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Consumers Call Jacksonville Doctor Strike Misguided

Jacksonville, FL – Florida’s largest consumer group, the Florida Consumer Action Network (FCAN) today said striking doctors in Jacksonville have been intentionally misguided by insurance industry propaganda. The consumer group contends the doctors either have ulterior motives, or are simple just getting bad advice.

According to Executive Director of FCAN Bill Newton, “The doctors know caps won’t lower rates, and the insurance companies have admitted to it. Doctors don’t support the Senate bill that rolls back rates, and instead are striking to get immunity from lawsuits, which has nothing to do with lowering rates. Therefore, the doctors should admit that aren’t striking for lower rates or that they have been so misguided by the insurance industry that they don’t know what they’re doing.”

The consumer group also said that doctors were harming their patients by striking. “No one has died yet and we hope no one will, but the doctors are putting their patients at risk while they pursue their political agenda. That’s wrong,” said Newton.

FCAN is supporting ballot initiatives that will roll back rates and end the insurance company anti-trust exemption. The consumer group said these measures and others contained in their initiative package will end the cycle of skyrocketing insurance rates in all lines of insurance and bring immediate and needed relief to all insurance consumers, not just doctors. The initiatives also open up the insurance rate making process by allowing full scrutiny of rate increase requests.

FCAN contends the current rate cycle was brought about by financial market conditions and mismanagement by insurers. First Professionals Insurance Company (FPIC), Florida’s largest medical malpractice insurer, lost millions on its investments in Worldcom bonds. However, FPIC has merely passed those losses onto the premium payers, mainly doctors.

FPIC also makes a \$500,000 annual contribution to the Florida Medical Association (FMA) to be its sole endorsed medical malpractice insurer. The consumer group says doctors should check on the motives of the leadership at the FMA. According to Bill Newton, “The FMA is doing the bidding of the insurance companies. They are simply following the money. The fact is that the insurance companies are intentionally hurting the doctors and robbing them blind. The insurance companies see wealthy customers who can afford to pay when they look at doctors. The doctors need a new lobbyist that will lead with integrity and tell them the truth.”

Florida Consumer Action Network has over 40,000 members and is a statewide not-for-profit organization that works on insurance, utilities, health care and environmental issues.

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